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B E R T H A .

A ROMANCE OF THE DARK AGES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“ A CATHOLIC HISTORY OF ENGLAND. ”

I N T H R E E V O L U M E S .

V O L . I .

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DOCTOR MACCABE. J. P.

Hawkhurst, Kent.

THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED :

A TESTIMONY OF

AFFECTION AND RESPECT,

BY

HIS RELATIVE AND FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

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B E R T H A .

CHAPTER I.

THE RENCONTRE.

FOR a few moments there had been a commotion of tinkling bells, and the atmosphere around appeared to have been aroused from its peaceful stillness by the murmuring accents of many prayers.

The bells ceased—the words of prayer were heard no more, and the solemn silence, and the calm repose which had before rested on the green banks, and the smooth waters of the small river Aschaff descended upon

them anew as the maiden Beatrice again sank back upon the silken cushions on which she had previously been reclining, and again cast from her hands, from time to time, a wild flower, and watched it, as the little rippling waves floated it slowly, and seemingly sadly away from her sight.

“ Lady !—Beatrice ! dost thou not hear me ? The Ave-Maria bell of evening has rung ; and it is time that we returned to the Castle. Wherefore dost thou so intently, and yet so idly, watch those flowers, as they are borne away from thee ? ”

“ I am thinking,” said she, who had been addressed as Beatrice, “ I am thinking, my good Agatha, that I am myself like to those wild flowers. Like them, I know not why God has been pleased to place me in the midst of these deep forests, and upon the banks of this river. Like them I am unknown—like them I am of no benefit to my fellow-creatures—and if some rude hand should tear me, as I do them, from this solitude and cast me upon

the waters, I know not what may befall me—I may wither away in the glare of the sunshine, or I may be overwhelmed by the tempest, or I may be cast upon some shore, where there grow nought but poisonous plants, and there expire a foul and noisome thing in the sight of God and man. These are my thoughts, Agatha,—am I right in giving way to them?”

“Thou art not, Beatrice ;” said Agatha, “for thou dost not reason rightly. These flowers, insensible as they are, perform strictly the functions for which they were formed. They beautify and enrich the soil from which they spring, and the skill of man can extract from them medicinal powers. In death as in life they have their uses. Thou art not like to the flowers ; for they live but for a day, whilst thou, if thou faithfully fulfill the duties which God has assigned thee, shall bloom in immortal glory in the garden of Heaven. Thou hast compared thyself to a fading flower clothed but with an evanescent beauty. Let the

waters on which thou hast cast them be thy monitor. Our several duties in this life may be compared to the stream of the Aschaff itself, now flowing through beautiful scenery ; then through sweet, smiling lands ; and forcing its way over rugged rocks, and then down awful precipices, but still persevering, still resolute, still onward in its course, until at last it finds its repose and its reward in the Ocean-eternity of Divine Love, of which it then forms a part, and from which it is no longer distinguishable ; but is all in all, and one with God himself. On the other hand, the waters that are turned away from the stream are but too often like to those faculties which we devote to temporal uses—they are stained with passions, and begrimed with the filth of pride, and become a stagnant pool, from which emanate pestilence, disease, and death. But come—I repeat to thee the Ave-Maria has rung. It is evening time, and we should now be on our way back to the Castle.”

Beatrice smiled—there was a calm and gentle melancholy in the smile—and then she said,

“ Look at me, Agatha, and tell me, if you can, what is at this moment occupying not my thoughts, but my heart.”

Agatha did look ; and beheld before her one of the fairest faces, and most faultless forms that ever yet provoked the admiration of mankind. Beatrice was now fast verging on her seventeenth year. Her skin was of dazzling whiteness, except where a slight suffusion tinged without actually giving a distinct colour to the cheeks, and it came in strong contrast with the ripe and cherry redness of the lips, and still stronger with the full, large, dark eyes, and darker eye-brows, in both of which might be said to be placed that intellectuality of expression, and that spirit of character, which otherwise were not impressed upon her small, delicate, and feminine features ; whilst the neck was concealed, and the shoulders were covered

by large masses of silken light-brown hair, of a hue so indistinct that when the rays of the sun shone upon it, they seemed to be converted into threads of burnished gold. The tiny foot that peeped forth from the flowing robe, and the small hand that found its way out of the ample sleeve, testified as to the exquisite proportions of a form, which the dresses of the period disguised, but in this case could not conceal.

“Look at me, Agatha,” said the fair and gentle girl to her faithful and aged attendant; “and tell me if you can, what is at this moment most occupying my heart.”

“Thou art thinking that in a few weeks thou wilt be seventeen, and thou art hoping that with its arrival may come a cessation to that solitude in which thou hast so long pined.”

‘Alas! no—my heart is not sad, because a gentle mother greets me with an ever-enduring smile—I am not sad, because I can walk daily in these gloomy

forests—I am not sad, because I can repose for hours on the banks of the Aschaff—I am not sad, because I can bestow as many gifts as I please upon the hard-working serfs—I am not sad, because I can make the heart of many a poor slave joyful—I am not sad, because I have you, my ever-true, and ever-fond, and ever-faithful Agatha, at all hours by my side. All these are matters in which I should rejoice, for the benefit of which I should be thankful, and for the continuance of which I ought to pray. But young as I am, Agatha, I am not without knowledge—for you have been my teacher, and kindly nuns have been amongst my instructors—and with that knowledge I am sad—very sad, dearest Agatha—for I see that my life is a mystery—that I am surrounded with a state, that should not be mine, unless I were the daughter of a Duke ; with boundless riches that I could not possess unless I were the daughter of a Count ; and still

with as much watchfulness bestowed upon, and as many guards surrounding me, as if I were the daughter of the Emperor himself. And yet, I know, and I see—nay, what is more—I feel, that my father is none of these. He comes here always unexpectedly—he leaves here without ever bidding us—at least, me, farewell. He wears not the garb of a knight, nor does he even bear the shield of a freeman. There is about him, or around him, no emblem of authority. That he cannot be a serf his riches show—that he must be a man in some way illustrious, his look, his manners, his very bearing plainly indicate. I love him, because I am told he is my father ; but that he loves me, I doubt, for I never yet caught his eye fixed upon me, that there was not mingled in his glance far more of sadness than of affection. These are the things that occupy my heart—therefore am I sad ; but can you, dear Agatha, say aught that may aid me in unravelling this mystery ?”

The attendant hemmed audibly, and coughed hysterically two or three times whilst the maiden was thus addressing her; and instead of answering the interrogatory thus put directly to her, she sought to evade it by putting another question :

“But tell me frankly, Beatrice—is there no other thing occupying your heart, but what you have now said? Does not your heart, or your memory ever carry you back to other times and other persons?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Beatrice, with a face now flushed with pleasure, and an eye brilliant with animation; “I do think—often think—oh! how often think—of another sky, another land, and another clime than this—of a land, which you have told me is the land of my birth—the ever-lovely, sweetly-smiling Italy. It may be a child’s fancy, but to me it seems as if such a land could alone be seen in a dream. I think of it—and I am back again upon the borders of the Lago Maggiore—and there I see upon the shore the clustering vines—

the rose-embowered cottages—the green woods and the greener-leaved forests—and upon the pellucid waters of the blue lake, reflecting back a still more purely blue sky, I see the light boats, and hear the joyful songs of happy fishermen, whilst far away in the lake I behold an island which is all one flower-garden, whilst above it rise terrace over terrace, palaces of snow-white marble—and all these I see again in my dream, or my memory shows them as they appeared to me when a child—and then too, I do think of one, for whom all these things seemed to have been made ; but when I saw him I cannot now remember whether on the land, or on the island ; but in the midst of them I certainly did see *him*.”

“And who is *he* of whom thou speakest ? Dost thou recollect his name ?”

“I remember some one—a boy with light blue eyes, and the flaxen hair, and the heavenly smile of those young and innocent cherubs that are pourtrayed in my mother’s

grand psalter as fluttering around the head of the Virgin. I remember him, and the thoughts of him are as dear to my heart as the thrilling strains of the nightingale that fill, when all else is silent, the whole creation with melody. Oh, yes, I do think of him."

"And dost thou not recollect his name?"

"I do."

"What is it?"

"Alas, I know but too well why I hesitate to speak it aloud. It was Magnus."

"Magnus--Magnus," repeated Agatha, in a far louder tone than her mistress had originally pronounced the word; and as if taken completely by surprise by its utterance.

"*Who calls on Magnus?*" exclaimed a young man apparently twenty years of age, bounding from a boat upon the bank, and motioning to his four attendant rowers, as he did so, to push on to a creek at a few yards distance.

“Who calls on Magnus?” he repeated, in a higher tone, as the thick-growing trees prevented him for a moment from perceiving Beatrice and her attendant.

The tones of his well-known, long-remembered voice were at once recognized, and Beatrice stepped forward, saying—

“I call upon Magnus—if it be the Magnus I knew when he was a boy.”

Magnus and Beatrice stood face to face with each other.

“Beatrice!” he said.

“Magnus!” was the only word she spoke.

They looked upon, but they could no longer recognize each other: the girl had become a woman; the boy had grown into a man. Her that he had rushed forward to kiss, he now feared to approach; him that she had hastened to meet, and with the intention to cast her arms around his neck, she now looked upon but for an instant, and then trembling cast her eyes

upon the ground. He beheld before him a woman of more surpassing beauty than he had ever fancied could be discovered in his boyish dreams ; and she found placed before her, in the person of Magnus, all the graces of juvenile loveliness in face, combined with the commanding stature, the strength, the dignity and the majesty of manhood.

“Alas !” said Beatrice, for she was the first to speak, although she had not dared to look a second time at him, “we are both greatly changed.”

“Yes—Beatrice,” he said, his gaze still fixed upon her, and seeing nought else in the world beside. “Yes, Beatrice, we are both changed ; I for the worse, or you would not keep your eyes thus turned away from me ; and you—oh ! how much you are changed—I have always thought of you as an angel ; but now—I could kneel down and worship you.”

“I pray your pardon, my lord,” said Agatha, here stepping between the youthful

pair, "I am the attendant—or, as she in her goodness calls me, the friend—of the Lady Beatrice. From her I never heard your name before. Neither has her mother ever spoken of you to me. The language you have now addressed to the Lady Beatrice should not be spoken to her, but with the permission of her parents. I cannot invite you to their castle ; but you know yourself if you would be welcome. If you would, it is there and not in this wild wood you should see the Lady Beatrice ; if you would not, then the words you could not speak to her there, you should not give utterance to her here, where there are none to protect her, but an aged attendant like myself, and a few armed serfs that wait for us, in the adjoining valley."

These words were apparently addressed by Agatha to Magnus ; but were really intended as a guidance to Beatrice for the conduct that should be adopted by her on this occasion ; as Agatha perceived that

her admonition was poured into the ears of a man, who was as if deaf. All the faculties of Magnus seemed to be absorbed in the contemplation of Beatrice ; he gazed as if sight could never fail in looking upon her, and he appeared to wait until she would speak, in order that his hearing might so be restored to him.

“ You say now, as you always speak,” observed Beatrice, “ justly and wisely, kind Agatha. It is in my father’s hall that Magnus should be received : it is there that seneschal, and groom, and page, should wait upon him. Come, Magnus.”

“ I go, beloved Beatrice—dream of my boyhood—thought of all my prayers, Beatrice—I go wherever you desire,” stammered forth Magnus.

“ Come—come quickly—dear Magnus,” answered Beatrice, now looking up in the face of her youthful friend, and a single, glowing glance of love, repaying him a thousand-fold for the tender expressions he had used. “ Come—my mother will be so

happy to see you grown so tall, and so brave-looking, and so—so—much darker than you were when a boy ; for I remember often speaking of you to my mother, and once to my father—and—ah ! woe is me ! Why have I mentioned *his* name ? or why thought of these doleful circumstances—”

‘ And wherefore not ? Why stop, dearest Beatrice ? ’ enquired Magnus, observing her pause in her hasty and onward career.

“ Alas ! Magnus, I remember upon one occasion, speaking to my father, and telling him of my infantile dreams respecting the Lago Maggiore, and then speaking to him about you—and how much I then loved you—and I remember his then questioning my mother about who might be this Magnus, that I praised so much—and of her, telling him who you were ; but I know not what she said—”

“ I,” remarked the young man, firmly, but still in no haughty spirit, and with

no boastful manner ; “ I am no poor tungin in a district, nor a mere Graf in a county. I am of an ancient race. I am Magnus, Duke of Saxony.”

“ To me,” hastily observed Beatrice, “ you are not tungin, Graf, nor duke—you are simply Magnus, my kindly playmate on the bright lake of Lombardy—and—sad it is to tell, that whatever my mother may have told respecting you—and, until that day, she had never spoken of you but in strongest terms of endearment ; and, therefore, must have spoken in admiration of you to my father ; but, be it what it may, I must now add, that my father told me, if I would not bring down shame upon my own head, and curses upon his, never again to mention your name ; never again to think of you. From that day to this, I have strictly kept his commands. I have not spoken of you, even to my faithful Agatha. But, as to not thinking of you ! I could not there obey him—a child’s first affections are a rich mould from which,

are ever springing, thoughts of the loved and the absent. But then there is my father's prohibition respecting you. No—Magnus, I must not, cannot, dare not, bring you to the castle.”

“But I, Beatrice,” replied the youth, “will go there—not now—not as a poor suppliant—not as your companion, and bring down censure upon your head, nor in such a manner as to cause you to shed a single tear for my sake—*you*—a single tear of whom I would not exchange for the most precious diamond in the imperial crown. I will go to your father's castle as becomes me—accompanied by my guardian, Otho of Bavaria, and attended by my knights, as seemeth my birth, my wealth, and my rank—and Beatrice—dearest Beatrice—I will go there to demand of your father your hand. I ask not—care not—what may be his rank in life ; if he were a king, I am his equal—if he be a poor noble—which I think he is not—or a still poorer freeman—which I am sure he cannot be : but still,

if poor, I go to make him most rich by the marriage-gift I shall bestow upon him : in exchange of the priceless treasure of your virgin hand. Yes—Beatrice—it is well, that here, in this dark forest, and by this silent stream, we should part. Loved woods! and dear waters! that I, in boyish idleness, this day visited, little knowing that her, whose image has preserved me from all the vileness that youth and passion, and evil example might have otherwise suggested to me—that even she—always thought of—was to be found on the remote banks of the Aschaff. Here then, on this spot, where the pilgrim heart of a lover has, at last, found repose—here let us part—we cannot part but in sorrow, as we can never meet but in joy—but here we part—part in sorrow and in hope. Say then, Beatrice, but the sad word—farewell, and the light boat that conveyed me hither shall, in a few hours, carry me back to my uncle, Otho, who is now at Frankfort.”

Beatrice was silent. Contending thoughts, or rather conflicting emotions filled her heart ; joy commingled with sorrow ; hope dashed by fear : the truthfulness of her lover—that lover first discovered in the boy that she had been forbidden to speak of ; the disinterested gallantry, the noble bearing, the generous affection combined with the manly loveliness of him who now stood by her side : these, and a thousand other ideas and feelings, until then unknown to her, all came upon her together : they could find no expression in words, and she wept—wept bitterly.

“ My Lord,” said Agatha, “ you have spoken as becomes you. You have spoken as a knight of whose homage an Empress might be proud. You will do that which is your duty. I too must do mine. I must mention, the moment I return to the Castle, that this interview has taken place between you and the Lady Beatrice. I cannot tell it to her father ; for he is now absent from the Castle ; but I shall men-

tion it to her mother. By her advice, Beatrice, I am sure, will be guided ; and that advice may be useful even to you ; for the lady Bianca must know the reason wherefore both she and her child have been forbidden to mention your name. My Lord Magnus, whatever be the cause for the father of Beatrice forbidding your name to be mentioned by her, be assured it cannot be a light one. It certainly cannot be from caprice, or sudden passion, or originating in a rude gust of temper ; for her father is ever loving and ever kind to her. ’

“ But why entertain a prejudice against one he has never seen ? Why dislike the name of one who can have done him no wrong ? ”

“ Ah ! my Lord Magnus,” replied Agatha, “ you are as yet untried in the ways of the world. You know not your fellow-creatures : you know not for what poor, worthless, idle things, they are ready to cut each other’s throats. How, unknow-

ing each other, they yet hate and are ready to kill one another : how those who are mutually unaware of one and the other's existence, until they encounter as foes on the battle-field, are, because they see here those with white-painted shields, and there—those with party-coloured bucklers, prepared ready, nay anxious to shed their blood ; and cruelly with the rude hands of man, to take away that existence which God alone can give. Why hates the Hungarian noble the Bohemian boor, or why the Bohemian boor the Hungarian noble—neither has done to the other the slightest harm ; but they loathe each other because dwelling almost in the same district, they call themselves different names. They kill not to revenge a wrong, but to strike from off the fair face of creation a fellow-man because he has *a name*, and that name does not chance to be their own, and that they have been told it is a name they ought to dislike ! When nations so slaughter each other for so slight a cause, who is to an-

swer for the hatreds which conspicuous factions in the course of generations have produced? Where you first saw the Lady Beatrice, is a land of local jealousies, of municipal hatreds, and provincial animosities. Wise men, good men, generous-hearted men, (and the father of the Lady Beatrice appears to me to be one of these) see the folly, and even the wickedness of indulging in those prejudices; but the men of this world—those who are called wise and politic men—are well aware how dangerous it is to violate a custom, and how perilous to act in defiance of a long-established prejudice — and hence they conform to what they condemn, and outwardly comply with what in their hearts they despise. Apparently wise, good, and generous-hearted as the father of Beatrice is he may be one of these men; or he may be, for ought I know, sincere in his fanatical hatred of you, because you are not of his faction in Italy, or, because your exalted rank places

you, and solely by reason of that rank, at the head of an opposite faction."

"But I," observed Magnus, "have nothing to do with the factions in Italy."

"Neither, to my knowledge, has the father of Beatrice," replied Agatha. "I was but supposing that which might be, and which, if it were the fact, would explain why the mention of your name may be disliked by another, even though he had never seen you ; and that there would be nothing marvellous nor uncommon in such an antipathy, even where persons are utter strangers to each other. In your case, however, whatever be the cause, it must, I presume, be known to the Lady Bianca. She loves you : she cannot participate in the prejudices of her husband, or she never would have permitted you to be the play-fellow of her only child. From her can be ascertained what is now the feeling of her husband towards you, whether it still continues hostile, or, if it were mixed up with any resentment of a faction, whether

it may not have passed away—as the interests, combinations and prejudices of factions in Italy frequently assume new aspects. All these things may be ascertained in the course of a few hours ; and if I might venture to advise you, my Lord Magnus, I would say, before even consulting your uncle, learn whether your suit would be favourably received by the parents of Beatrice ; for, if it were not—if you were to demand her hand and to be refused, then you would bring down upon the head of one, who loves you—upon a young and innocent girl—the resentment of that great family, and that princely race, of which you, though young, are the recognised head.”

“But how ascertain the fact ?” asked Magnus, “How know whether the father of my beloved Beatrice indulges in what I cannot but consider a capricious dislike of me ? Tell me that, and I shall follow implicitly what I cannot but consider your prudent advice ?”

“Thus,” answered Agatha. I have already told you that the father of Beatrice is now absent from the Castle. His return may be expected momentarily—it may be to-day—to-morrow—or some day this week. Be here then on this spot, this day week. You shall be met here by Beatrice and me, if the answer be as we all desire. If it be otherwise, then it shall be my painful duty alone to communicate the purport of the message that is confided to me. And now, my lord, let us part. The shades of evening are fast falling around us, and it is time that were on our way homeward.”

“Yes—yes—let us part,” sighed forth Magnns. “Let us part *here*, Beatrice, where I have first, for so many long years, seen thee—beneath this beech tree—here let me kneel—and here kiss—thy hand—it is all I ask of thee—my sweet one—my beloved—my only destined bride!”

Beatrice could not speak. She unfastened a thin chain of gold from her girdle,

to which a small cross, set with rubies was attached, and as Magnus knelt before her, she flung it over his neck. In doing so, her hand touched, but did not rest upon, his head, as she did so, she said, as if pronouncing a blessing :

“ May all the angels guard my Magnus !” She then burst into tears ; and, as a burning kiss was pressed upon her taper fingers, she sighed forth—“farewell !” and rushed hastily from the spot, where Magnus remained kneeling.

A few moments afterwards the neighing of horses, and the pawing of palfrys, were heard intermingled with clash of spears, borne by the armed men who acted as the escort of Beatrice and Agatha, and their female attendants.

With the sound of the first movements made by those departing from the forest to the Castle, Magnus started from his knees. He remained standing and listening to the retreating tramp of horses and of

men, and when all had become silent, he walked back sadly and gravely to the creek in which his light boat lay, and then was carried swiftly away with the current of the stream.

All was now silent in the forest. The glades were fast filling up with darkness, and the last gleams of twilight seemed to cluster around the old beech tree, which had witnessed the meeting and parting of the two youthful, innocent, pious and virtuous lovers, when there appeared where they stood, a single man as there appeared of old, in the garden of Paradise, an evil spirit who had witnessed virtue that he hated, and innocence that he loathed. This man could be observed first coming from out of the branches of the beech tree, and then gliding softly down by its trunk, until his feet touched the earth. This man was clothed from the head to the foot in green, and even though he believed himself to be alone in that dark, lonely forest, his face was covered either by a mask, or so co-

loured as to give him the appearance of a negro.

Upon this stranger's feet touching the ground, he paused. It might be for a minute or two. He then went cautiously round the trunk of the tree, examining all sides as he went; so as to be sure that there was no one there to watch him. Having satisfied himself that he was not observed, he then placed his hands to his mouth, and there was heard to issue forth sounds that precisely resembled the melancholy hooting of the owl. These sounds were twice repeated.

A pause of a few minutes occurred, and then there was heard across the waters the distant twittering of a swallow. Twice, too, were these notes heard, and then came the quick splashing of oars.

The movement of the oars ceased, and a man, whose face was darkened, or who wore a mask, advanced to the beech tree, and these words were exchanged between the two strangers :

“Have I spoken truly, Werenher?”

“Most truly, Egen.”

“Is she not fair and beauteous to the eye?”

“In Franconia, in Swabia, in Lombardy, in Bohemia, in Hungary, and in Poland, there is not one to equal her. She is alone fitted for an Emperor; but more important things are to be told than that there is a fair maiden in Aschaffenburg. Let the men row quickly.”

“They shall do so.”

The boat disappeared—and shortly afterwards, there was nought but darkness and solitude in the woods and streams of Aschaffenburg.

CHAPTER II.

THE EXPLANATION.

IN a small room, small in extent when compared with its great height—and this room so dimly lighted by a single lamp dependent from the roof, that alcove and doorway remained in darkness, there was to be seen a species of altar, that seemed to be but sufficient as a pediment for a large ivory figure of the Saviour resting upon a cross of wood so blackened by age that it appeared to be ebony. Before this altar, and

with the snow-white hands clasping the cross, and the ensanguined feet of the Sacred image, there was to be seen the bending figure of a female, covered with a long dark cloak, which falling over the head in front, and the feet behind, concealed face and person alike from the view ; so that it might be surmised the folds had been thus arranged by the wearer, in order that, shutting out all objects from her sight, she might devote herself wholly, heart and soul, to meditation.

An hour had nearly passed away, and she who knelt might still be seen in the same attitude. There was no sound of prayer—not one syllable spoken beyond a single ejaculation—and that one, THE WORD which comprises in itself suffering on earth, and salvation in Heaven—the name of Him before whose figure she knelt, and the contemplation of whose sufferings excited her devotion.

The silent and the lonely oratory was at length shaken by the sharp and sudden

ringing forth of a loud, clamourous bell ; but still the attitude of the kneeling, praying female was not altered. The chamber-door opened, and there crept in silently, slowly, and sadly, another female, who kneeling gently down by her whose devotions still continued, for a few minutes bent her head in prayer, and then throwing her arms around the kneeling suppliant, exclaimed—

“ Bless me, and pray for me, mother, for I am very sad, and have none other in the world to comfort and console me but you.”

“ God bless my Beatrice ! my gentle daughter—my only child ! ” ejaculated the female, as she stood up, and cast back from her the dark cloak, which had previously covered her.

“ God bless my child ! ” were the words now given utterance to by lips, so red, so fresh, and so beauteous, and covering such dazzling white teeth, that they seemed to be those of a sister, not a mother. Re-

garded in the dim light of that obscure oratory, the mother and the daughter seemed to be so very like each other that it would be scarcely possible to mark the distinction of years between them. Both had the same superabundance of light-brown, golden-shaded silken hair ; both the same satiny snowy skin, both the same exquisitely moulded small, feminine features, and both had the same large, lustrous eyes, in which shone forth, as if they were diamond sparkles from the pure soul within, glances of genius, of love, of truth, and of virtuous innocence, Regarded in the broad glare of day, perhaps one who knew both mother and daughter well, might from that knowledge be able to detect, in the eyes of the first the traces of many bitter tears, from which her youth and inexperience had preserved the latter. In all other respects they seemed the same ; for if care had been in the mother's heart, it had not, at least as yet, worked its way to the surface, nor deformed by a

single wrinkle that fair face on which the youthful graces still seemed delighted to dwell. The figures of both seemed to be moulded in the same form ; and each alike was faultless. In Bianca was beheld the lovely woman not yet forgetful of her girlhood, and in Beatrice the girl surprised to find herself admired as a woman.

“ But what say you, my child,” enquired Bianca, of your being sad ? or, what can have caused your tears ? for I perceive you have been weeping.”

“ Alas ! mother, this has been an eventful day to me. I have seen him whose name I have for years been forbidden to speak.”

“ Ah ! me, you need not tell me more, Beatrice. In you,” said Bianca, “ I see myself revived. In you I behold my own sad destiny renewed. You love him, Beatrice—I see it all—and you are forbidden to love him by your father. Then think of him no more—nay, drive him from your thoughts, aye—even though

your heart, and with yours, mine should break in the effort."

"Oh! mother—mother—dearest mother, do not say such words as these. Do not drive me to despair—have pity on me—on my knees I beg of you to recall those cruel words—‘think of him no more!’"

And as Beatrice spoke, she knelt before her and hid her now clay-cold face in her mother's robe.

"It is just, oh, Lord! it is just," meekly ejaculated Bianca. "the sins of the parents should be visited on the children; for it is in *their* sorrows, that *our* sins are most bitterly punished. Had I been a good, and obedient child—had I done that which my father desired me to do, then, oh! God, I had never seen this good and gentle girl—this pure and stainless essence of my sinful heart—I had never seen her—dearer to me than life—than all else in this world—I had never seen her—my daughter—my beloved—my Beatrice, prostrate here

in grief before me—and for the same cause—Oh! Lord! for the same—the same—it is just—oh! God—how very just, and how very bitter.”

“ Ah! mother—pardon me!—indeed I did not intend so to grieve you. Do not you weep, mother, and I shall feel sorrow no more. I will speak no more of Magnus—I will not think of—Ah! no—I cannot do that; but I shall mention his name no more, and—dearest mother—it will be no sin to die then thinking of him, of you, of my Guardian Angel, of the Holy Virgin, and of God—”

Poor Beatrice could say no more—she fell prostrate at her mother’s feet, and bedewed them with her tears.

Bianca knelt down on the floor beside her child—kissed her a thousand times—then folding her arms around her, she said—

“ Come, Beatrice, rouse yourself—we must submit to the will of God, and not struggle against it. He sends us not a

single sorrow, that is not intended, if we make the proper use of it, for our sanctification. Our trials here shall be our glories hereafter, if we receive them as such from His all gracious, and ever compassionate hand. Come, my child, recline your form upon a couch, and rest your head on a mother's heart. You have, what I had not, a mother to advise you ; and you shall have, what I could not have, happily for herself, a mother, whose sad tale shall be to her child, at the same time an example, a guide, and a warning. Listen to me, Beatrice," continued Bianca ; " for I am now about to address you in language, such as I never spoke to you before. Yesterday you were a girl—to day you are a woman—for you have seen Magnus—I know that he has spoken to you of marriage—and you have in the boy you loved recognised the man to whom you would wish to devote your life. You have not told me this ; but in your eyes that have always been as truthful as your tongue, and

in my own heart, I have read it all. You love the very man that your father has forbidden you to name.

“ Alas ! it is so,” sighed forth Beatrice.

“ Then mark well, what I say, my child. I too loved a man, whose name I was forbidden by my father to mention. This is my sad story which must now be told to you for the first time. I am by birth one of the noble and ancient family of Albani, and my first recollections are of a castle high, perched up on an irregular mass of rock, looking proudly over the rich vineyards, smiling gardens, and sweet olive groves of Viterbo in the Roman States. I have no recollection of my mother—I can but remember, that from the steep castle on the rock I found myself as a child—a mere infant in the midst of a large nunnery—that there I was treated with such tenderness, that I cannot now say who was most kind to me, the venerable mother Abbess, or the poorest lay-sister that waited upon me. My childhood and my girlhood were

but as a single day—and that a day of unmingled happiness. From the convent I was taken back to my father's castle—and there I found one of whom I had never heard before—the youthful Eberhard. My father bid me love him as his friend, for in a recent visit paid by him to Rome Eberhard had rescued my father from the hands of one of those bands of assassins, in the pay of the Cenci—the curse to the Roman people, the affliction of pilgrims, the disgrace to Rome, the persecutors of the Pontiffs. It seemed that my father when poorly guarded was attacked in the streets of Rome by one of the gangs in the pay of those robber nobles; and he declared that his liberty would have been lost, and most probably his life sacrificed but for the timely aid afforded to him by Eberhard.

“About nineteen years ago, my dear child, you can have no adequate notion of what was the state of the City of Rome, and what peril the person encountered who

ventured to visit it, either upon the affairs of this life, or for the purposes of devotion. It has been thus described to me by a good monk, who was there at the period, that Gregory VI, of blessed memory, ascended the papal throne. I use his very words in describing the then existing condition of things. He said, that with the exception of a few towns in the neighbourhood of Rome, and the offerings of the faithful the Pope himself, had scarcely sufficient to subsist upon ; that the lands and cities which lay at a distance from Rome, and that were the property of the church had been taken possession of by robbers ; that the public roads and the highways not only in the Papal states ; but throughout all Italy were so beset, it might even be said thronged with thieves, that no pilgrim, unless protected by a large escort, could pass in safety along them ; that there were to be found swarms of miscreants upon every pathway, and that the poor not less than the rich were their victims ;

whilst the city itself which, for centuries, had been celebrated as the abode of holiness, was held by bands of knaves and assassins, who were not merely to be met with in the ancient forum ; but who audaciously unsheathed their swords over the sacred altars, and the very bodies of the apostles, and that the pious offerings which devout pilgrims had presented were torn away by those sacriligious villians, and wasted by them in drunkenness and debauchery. It was at the very time that these things were occurring, and when the good Pope Gregory VI. complained in the words of the Holy Scripture, that “the House of God had been converted to a den of thieves,” that my father travelled to Rome, and that he declared he was indebted for his life to the bravery of Eberhard.

“I learned then to look upon Eberhard as the preserver of my father’s life. Such a claim upon my gratitude made him find favour in my sight. Alas ! his personal

appearance, his gracious manners, and, his mental accomplishments soon ripened that sentiment into one of intense love. I did not feel that it was wrong to give way to it ; and as I had never been taught to disguise my feelings, I suppose not only Eberhard, but my father became conscious of them. The former cherished, the latter never said a word in disapprobation of them.

“I shall not now dwell upon the three months of supreme felicity, that thus passed away in the Castle of Viterbo. It is sufficient to say that they terminated for ever by my father proposing a second journey to Rome, which a missive from the Pontiff, who was then occupied in putting down abuses in the city and states of Rome, required him to take. He asked Eberhard to accompany him, and the latter, as it appeared to me, unwillingly gave his assent to that proposal.

“They departed with a numerous retinue for Rome. Four weeks then elapsed,

and at the end of that time, my father returned—*alone*!

“ My father appeared to me to have become in those few weeks an aged man. Grief or care seemed to have cast upon him a premature old age, which his years might yet have spared him. He was at all times a silent—a reserved man—wholly absorbed in the performance of his daily devotions—spending most of his time in prayers, and only varying them, by acts of charity, which he discharged not as feeling a pleasure in their performance, but as complying with what he considered to be an unavoidable and an irksome duty. To me he had always been gentle ; but never kind—that is he had never made me feel that I formed a portion of his happiness ; but that as he was detached from this earth, by every other tie, so that of love for his child did not bind him to it. As upon his return I knelt before him, to receive his blessing I was astonished to find him for the first time, since I was an infant, raise me from

the earth, clasp me in his arms, burst into tears, and exclaim—‘My child ! my poor child ! God bless thee, and strengthen thee, in thy grief.’

“ Confused—panic-stricken, I may say, by this unlooked for incident, and by such words as these, I could not speak to him.

“ ‘Bianca,’ he continued, ‘I must return to Rome this very day. His holiness the Pope, finding that his remonstrances are of no avail with the wretches who infest Rome, and who rob the pilgrims and travellers repairing to the city, has placed them under excommunication, and has confided to me the command of some troops for the purpose of cutting them off by the sword. It is a difficult and dangerous task ; it is one which is full of peril—not merely the peril of battle, which I can joyfully meet, but still greater the peril of treachery, from which I cannot protect myself ; for I shall have to face soldiers in the field, and assassins in my chamber. The sword, the dagger, and the

insidious gift of the poisoner alike await me ; because the foes to the Pontiff are villains who have no faith in God, no pity for man, and no mercy even for children, I tell thee this, my child, because there is the chance that this may be our last meeting on this earth. For myself I care not ; for if I should fall in such a contest as this—in battling for my God, my prince and the church, then I look for my reward in Heaven. But in such a case what is to become of thee ? At once repair to the convent in which thou hast been educated, and there devote thyself to the service of Heaven—there seek for that Spouse, who is all Truth as He is all Charity, with whom the heart-broken find repose, and from whom the heavily-laden receive relief. I say this to thee, because I know the state of thy heart—I say this to thee, because if I return living to Viterbo, I forbid thee ever to mention to me the name of Eberhard, and if it be otherwise, then I say to thee as thou wouldst prize a father's bless-

ing in this world, and in the next, think no more of the man—’

“ With these words my father embraced me, and again quitted the Castle.”

“ Alas ! mother, your situation was as doleful and as dreadful then as mine is now,” observed Beatrice.

“ It was, my child ; but in this respect far different. I had not then a mother to advise me. I had not even amongst my female attendants one like Agatha, to whom I could speak with the same confidence, and with the same reliance on her good sense, as if she were a mother. They were all but the wives and daughters of ignorant serfs. I was alone—alone in the Castle of Viterbo—alone in the wide world with my inexperience, and my affections ; knowing naught of guilt myself, and never suspecting it could be practised by another

“ Beatrice, by your own grief at this moment you can judge how sad was the state in which my father left me. The

unavailing pangs of a vain sorrow are but rendered more bitter by their recapitulation, and I therefore shall not dwell on mine. My days were days of dull despair, my nights, nights of sleepless anguish. So I remained for some weeks, until at length intelligence reached the village of Viterbo, that the robber-hordes of Italy had received assistance from some of the troops of the German Emperor, that both confederated together had defeated the Papal soldiers commanded by my father, that in the conflict my father had been slain, and that now the robber-bands swelled into the greatness of an army were laying waste the villages, and that a special body of them were from revenge, marching upon Viterbo for the purpose of destroying my father's castle, seizing upon his wealth, and carrying me away as their prize.

“It was when the village was filled with lamentations at this intelligence, and when the few soldiers left by my father at the Castle were preparing for a vigorous and

desperate defence, that the well-known face and figure of Eberhard were seen approaching the walls. He came accompanied by a priest, and demanded instant admission to my presence.

“I was comforted ; but yet not glad to see him ; for my thoughts were engrossed by the direful tidings of my father’s death. Eberhard confirmed the truth of the rumours we had heard. He shewed us that they were even worse than we had supposed ; that the Convent to which my father had desired me to repair in case of his death, had been burned down by the robber-bands during the preceding night ; and he added that the main object those bands had in gaining possession of Viterbo was to seize upon me, in order that the daughter of the Pope’s champion might be exposed to a dishonoring doom, worse than death itself : he represented that the only chance of saving the lives of the inhabitants of Viterbo, and of myself escaping, was by

flying upon the instant with him—that as *his wife* I might pass through the enemies' lines, when there would be no possibility of saving me, as the daughter of Albani ; that for this purpose, in case my father's chaplain was absent he had brought with him a priest ; and that he had provided himself with a warrant bearing the seal of the Emperor which even the rudest gang of footpads in Italy would not dare to disrespect.

“It was under those circumstances of grief, of terror, and of sudden surprise—and urged too on all sides by the retainers of my father, who knew nothing of Eberhard, but, that they had always seen him in the Castle, treated and acknowledged as my accepted lover, and my destined bridegroom—but I—who knew well—and remembered well my father's prohibition—did still violate that prohibition, and prepared for myself a life of endless sorrow, because of useless repentance ; for I be-

came the wife of Eberhard—of your father.”

“Of my father !” cried Beatrice, forgetting for the moment all her griefs, in the strange tale thus told by Bianca. “Of *my* father ; but you do not *now* call him Eberhard.”

“Ah, my child,” said Bianca, “a parent’s solemn prohibition can never be lightly violated. It is certain to bring sorrow in this world upon whomsoever is its transgressor, although repentance may much mitigate the tremendous punishment that otherwise awaits it in the world to come.”

Bianca here wept for a few moments and then proceeded :—

“It was in my father’s Castle of Viterbo, and with my father’s prohibition in my ears ; but by my father’s chaplain, and not the priest that Eberhard had brought with him that I was there hastily united

to him, and then hurried away from Viterbo, to that dwelling place on the Lago Maggiore where you were born. There he cherished me—there he cared for me—there surrounded me with all the luxuries that wealth could command, or even caprice suggest. No lover could be more fond—no husband more attached to his bride; and yet, with all this, my child, I had ever before my conscience my father's prohibition, and I had ever present to my senses its daily punishment, for your father no longer called himself Eberhard—at the Lago Maggiore he was only known by the designation of Manfred.”

“What! another name! and that too not only different from Eberhard, but also from that which he now bears, and which I alone remember to have heard him called,” observed Beatrice, lost in astonishment at the disclosures of Bianca.

“Yes—yes—the marriage so hastily

proposed, and so speedily accepted, has been followed by long years of mystery—the reason of which I cannot divine, and the motive for which I cannot solve. Had my husband,” said Bianca, “been a peasant, and practised a deception upon me—the daughter of a noble—for the purpose of being married to him, still I must love him, as I do love him, despite of all this mystery; for *oh! my child, believe me—that never yet did there live a better, a more kind, a more tender, or a more devoted husband than your father.*”

These last words, and *these last words only*, were heard by a person, who did not enter the room by the door, but appeared to emerge from a dark alcove at the back of the speakers. The movement made by him in entering was heard by Bianca, who observed, though she did not appear to notice, that he had *not* passed through the door-way.

“Alas!” thought Bianca, “still another

secret with which I was not before acquainted."

She turned, however, suddenly round, and as if she were but continuing the discourse she had with her child, observed—

"But *here*, Beatrice, is *your father*."

"Ah! my father!" shrieked Beatrice, as she fell fainting back upon the couch on which she had been resting.

The man trembled—it might be with fear, or terror, upon finding that the name of "*father*" had excited something like horror, when expressed by the lips of his own—his only child! For a moment that piercing shriek had unnerved him. He started back, and for an instant there was what might be regarded as the wild glare of an infuriated maniac in his eyes; but it passed speedily away, as he perceived that his child remained still insensible, and that all the thoughts and cares of his wife were devoted to the endeavor to restore animation to the now seemingly lifeless Beatrice.

This man so strong in frame—so vigorous in years, whose sable locks and thick black beard were but intermingled with a few grey hairs, whose dark skin was flushed with the ruddy hue of health, and who appeared, with his high forehead, his finely-formed Grecian nose, and well-rounded chin, and stalwarth figure, a paladin of the army of Charlemagne, now knelt down upon the floor, and seizing the senseless hand of his child, he covered it with kisses, and wept—wept as if he were a poor, timid, weak, and helpless woman!

The cares bestowed by Bianca, and perchance, the warm tears shed by her father on her hand, at length restored Beatrice to perfect consciousness of what was passing around her.

“My child,” said Bianca, “you are now too agitated by the events of this day to continue either your conversation with me, or to discuss with your father the subject

to which we were referring when he entered the oratory. Betake yourself now to your bed. Good night, my child, good night."

"Good night, dearest mother," said Beatrice, clasping her mother in her arms and kissing her fervently on both cheeks. "Good night, father," said Beatrice, kissing his hand, and without venturing, or perhaps wishing to look in his face, before she left the room.

The father marked the distinction in his child's manner to himself and to her mother, and again a slight shiver passed through his frame. He walked up and down the room for a few minutes, and then, as if perfect calmness had been restored to him, he said :

"Of what, Bianca, were you and our child talking when I entered the room ?"

"Of you, my husband, of myself, of herself. But may I speak to you on a subject

that you have previously forbidden me ? or shall our faithful Agatha, on whom no such prohibition is laid, be your informant ?”

“ Speak what you wish, Bianca—if it be good news, it will be more welcome from your lips than from any others ; if it be bad, then the evil will be the less, for it will be told to me in accents to which I love at all times to listen.”

“ Then, husband, I have to speak to you of Magnus.”

“ Of Magnus ! Magnus ! what Magnus ?” asked her husband.

“ Of what Magnus ! Is it possible you can ask that question, when you prohibited either me or my daughter ever again mentioning his name,” said Bianca, surprised at the strange forgetfulness of her husband.

“ Oh, aye, I recollect now,” said the man, smiling ; “ Magnus was the name of some pretty boy—a pretty page, or puny baron, that Beatrice saw when she was a child at

the Lago Maggiore, and of whom the little wench spoke to me, one day, with all the enthusiasm of a love-sick maiden, although she could not then have been more than fourteen years of age. I forbade her to speak of him then, as I wished to frighten all such thoughts out of her head. I included you in that prohibition, as you too had seen him, and I was desirous that you should aid me in teaching her to forget him."

"Then, husband, if you thought it desirable to laugh such thoughts out of Beatrice's head, you adopted the worst course you possibly could have taken. Your prohibition gave a permanency to ideas that might otherwise have dissipated. But how came you to make such a mistake about Magnus as to speak of him as a little page, or a puny baron? Know, then, the facts, as Agatha told them to me previous to Beatrice visiting me in my oratory. This very day Magnus, who chanced to be

on the Aschaff, saw Beatrice in that favored nook on its banks, to which she is so fond of resorting—he there declared his love for her, and there avowed his intention to come here and demand from you her hand in marriage.”

“And what then is this Magnus, who thus so confidently speaks of demanding, as if he were entitled to receive my daughter’s hand in marriage?” asked the husband of Bianca—and as he did so, leaning with his right hand upon the altar-basement of the crucifix.

“He is,” answered Bianca, not noticing the agitation and the attitude of her husband. “He is,” she said, “Magnus, Duke of Saxony ; and he spoke of bringing with him his guardian, Otho, Duke of Bavaria, and he speaks, too, of his attendants, and of his knights, and of—but good heavens ! husband, what is the matter with you ? Are you ill ?”

These latter words were addressed to one

who did not hear. The hair of the miserable man had risen upon his head in horror, as if each particular fibre of the insensate mass had been endowed with life—his teeth were set—his eyes, glassy and staring with terror, were fastened upon the ivory image of the Saviour, which in his rude, convulsive grasp had been torn from the cross on which it had rested—and he stood thus facing it, and even looking defiance and seeming to examine it, as if he could detect upon the fixed features, a single line indicative of a triumph over *him*.

It was an awful thing to behold this devil-like outburst of living infuriated rage, and that inanimate semblance of meekness, of suffering, of patience, of agony and of forgiveness. The man stood, as we might suppose, a desperate agonized demon to stand defying the immoveable Godhead. He continued thus speechless, motionless, breathless, and then his rigid sinews relaxed—the figure of the Redeemer fell

from his grasp ; but was caught by the hands of Bianca, who reverently replaced it on the altar. He watched it, as it lay there, seemingly prostrate before him, and then exclaimed :

“ My God ! my God ! Thou hast abandoned me to perdition ! Must the punishment come in this world, as well as in the next ? Why afflict the innocent ? Why break the heart of the sinless ? Why doom to destruction, and why drive to despair those who have never offended Thee ? My saint-like Bianca—and now too the Virgin—Martyr, Beatrice ! They too are doomed ! And, what ! oh ! misery and despair, the wide world must hear of them and of me. The Duke of Bavaria comes to seek in marriage *my daughter* ! the daughter of —— oh, God ! if he should ever know *whose* daughter he wished to wed—and why is all this ? it is—accursed be the day that witnessed it—and accursed be my lips who pronounced

it — it is because of my vow — THE
VOW—”

And with these words, he rushed from the oratory and rode out of the Castle as if a demon had seized possession of him, and was bearing him off despite of himself to destruction.

CHAPTER III.

THE SERFS OF ASCHAFFENBURG.

THE morning following the events described in the preceding chapter was as fresh, as bright, as balmy, and as full of sweetness as a May morning ever is in Franconia—earth, and air, and sky, and meadow-land, and forest green, with the rippling Aschaff, and the silvery Maine, all combined together to make the heart of man glad ; and if that heart were not thrilled by a contemplation of the beauties of nature,

it was because it had made for itself an abode for vice, or because it was a victim of the vices of others.

In Aschaffenburg we have seen how in the course of a few hours one family was plunged into grief—and that apparently one endowed with all the blessings that this world can bestow upon her favorite children—how, despite of riches, and of health, (and as far as *two* at least of them were concerned) of virtue and innocence, sorrow gnawed at their heart, and despair sat at their fireside.

Let us turn then from the rich to the poor. It is necessary that we should, in pursuing the progress of our tale, do so. Let us leave not merely the mansions where luxury abounds, but let us betake ourselves to a hamlet, where the inhabitants are so very poor, and the time in which they live is not yet twenty years beyond the first half of the eleventh century—that even the name of “freedom” is unknown to them. Let us entreat our fair readers

to accompany us to that very spot near to which the charming town of Aschaffenburg is now situated. It is close to the place on which may be seen the confluence of the Aschaff and the Main. It is to a hamlet of serfs, attached to the monastery which stands on the top of the high, steep hill that overlooks them, and that with its thick walls and battlemented towers, seems at first sight to be a fortress—and so, in point of fact, for the purpose of defence it is, as the times of which we treat were such, that the wealth bestowed for the service of the church, and the benefit of the poor was never so safely guarded as when it was known that there were good swords and strong partisans ready to repel its aggressors.

For the present, however, there was no semblance of any such spoliating forays ever having been made. The hamlet of the serfs was in the enjoyment of perfect peace. The men and the women who dwelt in it had now for some hours

descended from the Abbey Chapel, where they had all heard mass together—the men had then betaken themselves to the fields, or the forest, in pursuance of their daily occupations ; and the hamlet was alone occupied by women and children. The women were, (what all women now-a-days in country villages are not,) well and comfortably clothed, although straw bonnets were then unknown, and cotton gowns an invention reserved for future centuries. In their ruddy cheeks, and round, smooth faces there were afforded the best proofs that they had abundance of wholesome food, while the shouts of laughter that arose from the playing groups of their children shewed that they at least were preserved from the pangs and tortures which large cities, and civilization have brought with them in modern times to unfed, uncared for, or union-nurtured infancy. The serfs, the serfs' wives, and the serfs' children were perfectly aware, that if their harvests failed,

the granaries of the monastery were well stocked, and that as surely as the monks were provided with a repast, they would not be left destitute of a dinner. The serfs too were assured that all they had to do was to provide the monastery with that certain quantity of produce from their lands, which they had stipulated to give, and all the surplus was their own—to change it if they liked into coin, or into golden ornaments for their wives, or rich garments for their daughters. They had not “freedom” to be sure ; but then they knew not want, nor cold, nor hunger, nor poverty ; and, we grieve to add, that, as far as they thought on the subject (which was but little) they did not even desire to be “free men ;” for they existed at a period of the world’s history when their enjoyment of the blessings of this life, and the preservation of life itself were both far more secure for him, who could, as a serf, claim the protection of the Lord

Abbot of Aschaffenburg monastery as his "master," than he who was poor, and, at the same time, "free," and "friendless."

We must not marvel then if the hamlet of serfs, at such a time, and upon a fine morning, in the month of May, was a scene of quiet happiness, and of contented toil, nor—that it should become a spectacle of joyous and bustling preparation when the serfs' wives and children remarked that the venerable Meginherr, their Lord and Abbot, was hobbling down the hill, evidently with the intention of paying them a visit. The moment this news got abroad, there was a fresh ablution of hands and of faces, and detachments of girls brought in, as prisoners of war, the struggling urchins, whose "plays" had rendered another scrubbing of their rosy features indispensable.

The Abbot Meginherr was now in his eightieth year. Of these eighty years, seventy had been passed in the monastery at the top of the hill, and the remaining

or rather the preceding ten as a child in the very hamlet, in which he now walked ; for Meginherr had been the son of a serf. Having distinguished himself as a pupil in the monastery school by his abilities, and proving himself by his piety, fitted for the priesthood, he had received his freedom from the former Abbot, and then entering into holy orders, had served in all the offices of the monastery, until he was at last elected as its Abbot. He had known the grandsires and the grandames of every man, woman and child in Aschaffenburg, and therefore he, in the truest, and purest sense of the word, regarded them *all* as "*his* children"—as his children to whom good food, and good clothing should in the first place be supplied—as his children for whose education he should provide, and for whose spiritual welfare he should be solicitous, because he believed himself to be responsible to God, for the immortal soul of every one of them. A profound scholar,

a great divine, and in the days of his vigour, an almost inspired preacher, he knew not, and thought not of any other place in the Universe but Aschaffenburg, and the dependencies on its monastery. To him Aschaffenburg was everything, for *there* was his allotted place in this world, and upon it he rivetted his whole mind, and bestowed all his mental gifts; and laboured by all his acts to shew how a Christian should prepare to die.

This good old man now entered the serfs' hamlet, and as he passed along, women and children knelt down to receive his blessing. He proceeded onward until he came to a large tree in the middle of the high-road, beneath the spreading branches of which the serf-carpenter had constructed a species of rough, rustic arm-chair, in which Meginherr seated himself. It was a favourite seat with him, and when he had been dead and gone many a year was still regarded by the simple serfs, with

great reverence—as a species of relic of one, whom they believed to be a saint in Heaven

In this rude chair, the Abbot Meginherr seated himself, and there he remained silent for a few minutes, exhausted by the toil of his walk, before he addressed a word to the persons by whom he was accompanied—these were the Prior of the monastery, two lay-brothers, and a tall man wearing the white, coarse robe of a pilgrim. The Abbot Meginherr threw his cowl back from his head as he seated himself; but the Prior, the lay-brothers, and the pilgrim all had their faces concealed by their deep hoods.

“Stranger,” said the Abbot, first addressing himself to the pilgrim, “dost thou require at this moment, food, refreshment, or spiritual consolation.”

“No, good father, I require nought pressingly from thee—I can wait thy leisure.”

“Pardon me, for not asking thee the

question before ; but an old man's tongue is not more nimble than his limbs, and these are such a weary burthen, that I have scarcely strength to drag them along. I cannot speak when I am a-foot, and having met thee on my path, I brought thee here, because it is the first place in which I could put the question to thee."

So spoke the Abbot to the pilgrim.

"I thank thee, Father," answered the pilgrim, for thy kindness ; but what I have to say to thee can be as well told to-morrow as to-day."

"Then in that case I shall make thee meanwhile witness of a joyful sight. Holloa ! where is my grand-nephew—the little flaxen-haired Meginherr. Come hither, sirrah ! Now, look at that urchin, Sir Pilgrim. Are not his cheeks shamefully red—and mark you how the rogue smiles. He is not more than eight years of age, and I grieve to say it, that he can say his *pater*, and *ave*, and *Credo* in Latin, as perfectly as if he were a Bishop—and sure I

am more acceptably to Heaven, than if he were an Abbot. See—the rogue’s cheeks are becoming more disgracefully red than they were before, because I praise him. Come hither, child, and kiss your poor old kinsman. And now, boy, take all the children of the village with you to the forest, and these two good brothers, who have got with them an enormous basket filled with snow-white new bread, and fresh butter, and jars of cream, and more dates, and plums, and dried grapes, than you and all your companions can devour between this and sun-set. Away then with ye, boys and girls, all to the forest—but mind, I shall expect that one portion of your play shall be to gather the sweet wild flowers, and weave them into garlands, that you may bring them to the Abbey Church in the morning, and place them on the altar of the Virgin—I shall look upon every one of them as your little prayers for her intercession during this day, and to-morrow, and all the days of your lives.

Away, Meginherr—away boys—away girls—away to the forest—have a merry day of it—be good, and you will be happy—Away! away!”

“Away! away! to the forest” were the words that now rang sharply through the air, as they came forth, in the shrill, chirping, joyous tones of childhood.

“Away! away! to the forest” were repeated in the deep base of the two lay-brothers, as they hurried after the galloping groups of children, and scarcely able to disguise the joy they felt, in thinking of the happy day before them—that of promoting the sports of the children, and of protecting them from the possibility of any accident occurring to them.

The Abbot Meginherr listened with intense delight to those joyous sounds. He smiled to see the children laugh, and his eyes filled with tears of pleasure, when their merry, and to him most musical huzzas! reached his ears. He turned his head in the direction which the children were taking,

and in that attitude he remained as long as he could detect a single sound from the infantine band that had so lately clustered around him.

While he was thus occupied there advanced towards where he sat a tall, thin man, whose skin seemed to be, from constant exposure to the weather, of the same texture and hue as tanned leather. This man's garments were composed of a leathern jerkin, over which were fastened, as if they were a robe, the skins of two wolves strongly stitched together, and confined at the waist by a broad belt of leather from which depended a short sword and a scrip, and in which was fastened a dagger; whilst at his back was a quiver of arrows, and in his right hand a stout bow. His feet were garnished with sandals, but he wore nothing on his head to protect him from the inclemency of the seasons. He advanced towards the Abbot for the purpose of addressing him, when he was intercepted by the Prior, who said to him :

“ Well, Bernhard, what brings thee, at this time of day, idling in the hamlet, when it is thy duty to be in the forest ? Dost thou too wish to waste our means in playing the truant ? ”

“ No, Sir Prior, I am no idler. My Lord, the Abbot, never called me so. I come hither, because I have been performing my duty as a forester.”

“ I do not understand thee, Bernhard. How can thy duty in the forest bring thee here ? ”

“ Because, Sir Prior, I have seen strange things in the forest ; the knowledge of which I do not think should be confined to myself.”

“ Ho ! some idle tale, I warrant—some flimsy excuse which may impose upon the weakness of a poor, old, doting man.”

“ I am, Sir Prior, the serf of the Lord Abbot—not thine. He shall judge my actions ; and, if he is as harsh as thee, I shall willingly submit to his sentence. It will, I know, be that of a father, who may,

however kindly disposed, yet mistakenly severe, punish his child. With thy permission I shall speak to the Abbot."

So answered the sturdy forester to the Prior, and then advancing to where the Abbot still sat, he knelt down and kissing his hand said—

"Father Abbot, thy blessing, upon thy unworthy child."

"God bless thee, Bernhard," replied the Abbot, laying his hand upon the head of his serf; "for thou hast ever been a good and faithful servant. What news from the forest, my son?"

"Strange news, Father Abbot," said Bernhard, standing up; "strange and curious news. Last night, whilst I was on the watch in the forest—I saw—descending from a tree—the beech-tree, the branches of which overhang the Aschaff—you know the place I speak of, Father?"

"I do my son—proceed."

"I saw there a man descending from the beech-tree—I thought he was a thief, who

had come to steal some of our venison, father, and I therefore kept a sharp eye upon him. That which appeared very strange to me, however, was that though his jerkin was of green, it was of the richest make ; and what was still more curious, his face was blackened. He seemed to me to be waiting for some person. In that conjecture I was correct. In a short time one dressed precisely as himself, and also with blackened face, joined him. They spoke a few words ; but what they said I could not hear, and then proceeded together to the creek, where a boat was in waiting for them. That boat I could perceive was manned by ten men, and no sooner had these strangers entered it, than it was rowed rapidly away, and soon disappeared from my sight. I have looked carefully round the forest this morning—I can find no traces of any snares having been set. Whatever has brought these strangers so near to the monastery, it certainly is not (and that I am sure of) in pursuit of game.

I deemed it then to be my duty to come here and tell thee what I had seen."

"Thou didst quite right, my child. Nay, it would have been wrong in thee to have concealed from me the knowledge of these things. They are, in truth, strange—passing strange—I cannot divine what they signify. What think you of them, Sir Prior?"

"I think, good father, that our *watchful* forester has fallen asleep, that he has had a strange dream, and that instead of stopping in the dull forest all this day, he has come to the hamlet to *amuse* us, and—*himself*, by narrating his vision," was the sarcastic answer of the Prior.

"As I am a living and a waking man at this moment, so was I, living and waking all last night in the forest, and saw all the things which I have this moment stated," said Bernhard.

"What thinkest thou, Sir Pilgrim?" asked the Abbot. "One like thee, who has seen many strange lands, must

better judge of such a wondrous tale than I can."

"I think," replied the Pilgrim, "that the forester has told the truth. I think the intelligence he gives may be turned to good account ; for those he has seen may be preparing not to despoil the monastery of a few deer, but its altars of their richest ornaments ; and if I might venture to advise thee, I would say that not a moment should be lost in putting the monastery in a state of defence. These may be spies from a hostile army."

"But we have no intelligence of any foes being in our land. This is Franconia, and not Saxony. We all love and obey King Henry here ; and we have not, like the Saxons, tumultuous serfs, who say they are freemen ; nor rebellious nobles, who will not permit themselves to be governed as the King chooses ; nor have we yet heard of a Franconian Bishop presuming to speak like the proud prelate of Halberstadt, of the rights and liberties of the Church, as op-

posed to the privileges and prerogatives of the Sovereign. Why then should we be apprehensive of danger?" asked the Prior.

"For the same reason that the hen in the farm-yard is apprehensive for the safety of her chickens when she beholds the kite permitted, with impunity, to rifle the dove-cot," was the reply of the Pilgrim. "Ye may consider yourselves safe, because ye have not been attacked; but calculate not upon the duration of any such safety, if it is dependent upon the opinion of those disposed to do evil, and who may regard you not as strong, but so weak as to be contemptible. Ye may not have been oppressed as Saxony has been; because it may have been believed that your oppression was practicable at any moment. If ye would secure yourselves from danger, prove that you have the power of punishing those who do you wrong."

"The advice you give, Sir Pilgrim," said the Abbot, "is that of an honest, a wise,

and a brave man, and it shall be followed by me. Hasten then, my dear brother and prior, to the monastery. Summon instantly all our armed retainers to our aid. See that the walls be manned. We have provision enough within our granaries, and our foes shall find—but God forbid that we have any!—that the old walls, and the brave hearts of the monks and laymen in Aschaffenburg monastery can withstand not only a vigorous assault, but a lengthened siege. Go, Sir Prior—go at once, and Heaven’s blessing go with thee.”

“I go, Father Abbot,” replied the Prior, muttering as he went, “more wasteful and useless expenditure! What a consumption of our choice wine, and our best viands upon these military retainers, as long as they garrison our monastery! And then there is the loss of money upon military preparations!—money!—money!—and *I* want it all—all—all. A plague upon this pilgrim—a plague, too, upon this old, un-

dying Abbot—spendthrift and waste-purse as he is !”

With such thoughts in his mind, rather than with such expressions in his mouth, the Prior hastened up the hill towards the monastery.

The old Abbot smiled, and thought to himself—

“ A good man—a very good man is our Prior ; but too anxious for the mere temporal prosperity of the monastery. He is moved to that by an excellent motive, doubtless. Ah, yes ! despite his rough nature, he is a truly pious man ; and when he shall have to look upon all here as his children, as I do, I have little doubt he will be an excellent and even compassionate father to them. I was not as careful a Prior as he is, and I am sure he will be a better Abbot than I am. But I pray your pardon, Sir Pilgrim, for not being more attentive to thee. Thou seest how my time has been occupied by the various matters pertaining to my happiness, and the discharge of my duty as

Abbot. What, may I ask thee, is the last shrine thou hast visited ?”

“The last shrine, Father Abbot that I visited, is the greatest upon this earth—it is the land which may be regarded as all one shrine; for its soil, its waters, its hills, its groves, and its city were the scenes of the birth, life, labours, sufferings, death, and resurrection of our Saviour.”

“What! then, thou hast been in the Holy Land ?”

“I have, father.”

“Oh, happy—thrice happy man! And, oh, how our temporal attachments cling to us! I would inquire of thee if in thy pilgrimage thou didst encounter a monk of mine—a good youth he was—Lambert, the monk of Aschaffenburg ?” asked the Abbot eagerly.

“I did—father,” said the pilgrim; “he is living—he is well—and may be daily expected home. I knew him well, father; and have often heard him express his anxious desire to return in the hope he

may see you living and strong, and that you may, in your goodness, pronounce your pardon upon him, for presuming to proceed on his pilgrimage without having first obtained your blessing."

"Alas! poor Lambert!" said the old Abbot, bursting into tears, "I have prayed daily for him since he departed. And now, good pilgrim, I pray of you, should I die before Lambert does return—that I accept through your lips his expressed intention of asking for my forgiveness; and that I now declare him absolved from the sin of disobedience—that I not only pardon him; but bestow upon him the kiss of peace, and pronounce a special blessing upon him. All this you will say to him, in case it should not please God, that I again see him in the body."

"All this shall, if life be spared to me, be told to Lambert," said the pilgrim.

"Wilt thou," continued the Abbot, "to this favour add another? Wilt thou not only pardon but gratify an old man's curi-

osity, who, until now, has never spoken with any one who has visited Jerusalem ?”

“Most willingly, Father,” replied the pilgrim ; “and as I believe it will encrease thy pleasure if there be other listeners than thyself, thou canst, if thou wishest it, have all the women in the hamlet around thee to hear the tale.”

“Thanks,” joyously exclaimed the Abbot—“a thousand thanks, good pilgrim—thou dost indeed know the secret of the old Abbot’s heart—that he can have no real pleasure in this world, if it is not partaken by his children. All the women—sayest thou ?—nay, we will have all the men of the hamlet too. Sound, honest Bernhard, thy horn—give forth the notes, by which the men may know they are on the instant to return to the hamlet.”

Bernhard readily complied with such a command. The discordant notes of the horn speedily wakened up from their toil all the serfs ; and in a few minutes afterwards they were to be seen running on all

sides towards the place of their abode. Each man, as he arrived, knelt before the Abbot, and received his benediction.

Meanwhile the women had brought out stools and benches, and tables, and there seated around the Abbot and the pilgrim, they patiently waited to hear not "the latest news ;" but the first news that had ever been brought directly to them from Palestine.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESCUE AND RECAPTURE.

It was a goodly sight to look upon—the face of that venerable, white-haired, feeble, octogenarian Abbot as he sat in his rustic chair, shaded from the warm sun-shine by the branches of the wide-spreading tree, and gazing upon the faces of his contented dependents, whose eyes were lighted up with love and reverence for him, and whose lively, noiseless attitudes demonstrated with what intense curiosity they awaited

the tidings of that holy land, of which they had so often heard before, but never until now had hoped to see one by whom it had been visited.

“My children,” said the Abbot, “before this good pilgrim, begins the narrative, I wish you to bear in mind, that you are to be no losers, by so readily coming round me at my call. You are here in obedience to me ; and therefore I intend, when I return to the monastery, to have it notified that you are all to be accounted as having done an entire day’s work for me, and you must each obtain the full reward for it. No thanks—no thanks, my dear children, but say, at your prayers to-night, one additional *ave* on behalf of a weak, and erring old man, who must speedily be removed from amongst you—and now, Sir Pilgrim, proceed with your narration of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”

“I believe, Father Abbot,” said the pilgrim, “that there never was, since the first days that the blessed Boniface brought us

from England to Germany the glad tidings of salvation, such a magnificent sight beheld as that which the City of Mayence and its environs presented in the autumn of the year 1064. It had been announced by Sigefrid, the Prince Archbishop of Mayence, and Gunther, Bishop of Bamberg, William, Bishop of Utrecht, and Otho, Bishop of Ratisbon, and other great prelates, and pious knights, that they intended to proceed on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and all good christians who chose to encounter the perils of such a journey, were invited to accompany them. Many did so—and I, among the rest, for reasons, my good father, which I shall explain to thee apart, but upon the solemn pledge of secrecy.

“There poured forth then, upon one bright morning in the harvest season, of the year, from palace, and mansions in the city, and from gaudy tents in the meadows around the city, a cavalcade of not less

than seven thousand persons ; the Bishops, and their trains all gorgeous with golden garments, in which the numerous jewels flashed forth millions of refulgent rays, as the sun shone upon them ; whilst before them, and around them, were seen the prancing steeds, the gay pennons, and the rich shields of numerous knights and brave soldiers. They seemed as if they were proceeding to a monarch's marriage festival, and not as about to encounter a long, hazardous, and dangerous journey. Of all the Bishops who had announced their intention of travelling to Jerusalem, I saw them all but one—the Bishop of Utrecht—and him I missed seeing, either because he did not travel with the same pomp as the other bishops, or, because he had been wounded, as it was reported, in one of the first rencontres with the army of the Arabs, and therefore compelled to return to Flanders.

“ Thus did our pilgrimage proceed until we reached Constantinople, where we were

all graciously received by the Emperor, with a single exception—it was that of Robert Count of Flanders, who was arrested in the garb of a poor pilgrim when we reached the territories of the Emperor ; and this because it was said a conspiracy had been discovered amongst the northmen who formed the body-guard of the Sovereign ; these northmen intending the moment Robert reached Constantinople to depose the Emperor, and placing Robert at their head, to have him elected as ruler over the East.

“ From Constantinople we travelled to Lycia, and no sooner had we entered upon the lands of the Saracens, than we found ourselves surrounded by immense numbers of the inhabitants. who were amazed at beholding the enormous wealth displayed by our bishops. Their censers of gold—their large and brilliant crosses—their magnificent vestments stiff with embroidery, glowing with a variety of colours, and above all the profusion of diamonds and of pre-

cious stones with which they were covered, excited first the astonishment—then the veneration of those barbarians, and lastly awakened their cupidity. They coveted the riches possessed by the Christians, and determined to obtain those riches by deeds of violence and bloodshed.

“The crowds gathered before us and behind us as we proceeded, until we arrived within a short distance of a place named Ramula, where there was discovered to be an immense army of Arabs prepared to assail and despoil us. Here we were attacked, and many of the Christians, I regret to say, acting upon the fanatical and foolish notion, that persons engaged upon a pilgrimage are not justified in using weapons of warfare to defend their lives and properties, permitted themselves with impunity to be attacked, so that in the first shock those mistaken martyrs were dashed to the earth, covered with numerous wounds, and all that they had upon their persons—even to their very shirts—aye—the

very thongs of their saddles were carried off by the plunderers. I heard afterwards that it was in this onset, that William, Bishop of Utrecht had his arm broken, and was borne from the field more dead than living.

“ The great body of the Christian pilgrims were not, meanwhile, idle spectators of this butchery and robbery, of their companions. It luckily happened that the place in which we were attacked was covered with stones. These we seized upon, and flung at our assailants with such hearty vigor, and right good aim, that hundreds of them were on the instant to be seen scattered about with broken skulls, smashed faces, and fractured limbs. We then took advantage of the panic we had caused amongst them to make a good, regular and well-ordered retreat to a hamlet that lay off the high-road—it was a hamlet of which you have all heard before—for it is called Capharnaum. In that hamlet there was an old stone house—surrounded by a

high-wall, and which, decayed and broken down as both were, served us all for the nonce as a fortress with its outer lines of defence. In the upper part of the house were placed the Archbishop of Mayence, and the Bishop of Bamberg, with their priests and clerks, and in the lower room the other bishops with their attendants. As to us laymen, we all did our duty manfully, in defending the outer wall ; we crushed our foes first by the stones we cast at them, and then, when they poured in upon us their spears and javelins, we drew these missiles from our shields, and a few amongst us, having, in battling at the gates, wrested their swords from the assailants, we made many a sally out upon them, knocking them on the head like so many mad dogs, or slaughtering them with as little mercy, as if they were wild beasts of the forest. Few as we were, compared with the number of our foes, we filled with terror the hearts of those ruthless infidels. That, which they saw they could not

gain by open force they determined to win by stratagem. They withdrew out of the reach of our weapons the great body of their forces. They distributed their army into four several divisions so as to invest, on all sides, the place in which we lay, and then, for the purpose of harassing us, and preventing us from enjoying the least repose, they kept up a succession of feigned attacks. This their great number allowed them to do, without fatiguing themselves, whilst they forced us all to be constantly on the alert.

“ For three days and three nights we were in this dire position—without food, without rest, without a moment’s cessation from the pangs of hunger, and the toil of battle. At last, upon the advice of our priests, we resolved to submit to the infidels—giving to them that for which they fought—all our treasures and valuable property, and they leaving to us that for which we alone cared—safety for life and limb.

“ With this intention an interpreter was sent to them notifying, that we were willing to surrender upon certain conditions. Along with our interpreter we saw, riding back to us in all speed, the Commander of the Arabs. He came accompanied with seventeen of the leading men of his army, and having reached the gate of our temporary fortress he planted there his own son, with strict orders that no one should be permitted to enter. This, I believe, he did, because he was afraid that if the whole body of his followers were indiscriminately let in upon us, they would, to his dishonour, and what he thought more of, to his great loss, murder and rob us all in the course of a few minutes, each man keeping for himself as much spoil as he could lay hands upon

“ Ladders were brought, and by them the Arab generals were admitted into the room in which were the Archbishop of Mayence and the Bishop of Bamberg, with their few attendants. No sooner did the Arab chief

find himself admitted than he addressed his conversation to the Bishop of Bamberg, because though younger in years, and inferior in rank to the Prince Archbishop of Mayence, still the Bishop was so commanding in person, so noble in aspect, and so dignified in his appearance, that, as I remarked a thousand times during our pilgrimage, wherever he appeared all eyes were attracted towards him, as to a marvel of heavenly beauty embodied in the form of a man. By birth a prince, and inheriting immense riches, he sacrificed rank, wealth, in fine—himself, a perfect offering to God and the Church. He was withal, so humble that the poorest never found in speaking to him, they were addressing a superior, and so very meek too was he, that even his very slaves could un-reproved give him a pert reply. I pronounce this eulogium upon him, good Father Abbot, for two reasons—first in praising him, I am speaking of the dead ; for the pious Bishop Gunther died in Hun-

gary as we were returning homeward—and secondly I speak thus of him, because I have to tell you now something about him, which it will rejoice every true, brave and pious Christian to hear.

“The Bishop of Bamberg being, as I said, addressed as the principal personage in the room, by the Arab chief, said to him, that the Christians were willing to give all that they had with them on condition of being permitted to depart free and uninjured.

“The Arab chief, elated with victory, and enraged on account of the great losses sustained by him and his men in the three days battle with us, replied, that it was for the victors, and not for the conquered to declare on what conditions a surrender should be made.

“‘Thou,’ said he, ‘for instance, and all thine, I shall take as my prize and property.’

“‘And what,’ asked the Bishop, through the interpreter, ‘wilt thou do with me?’

“ ‘ That fine blood, which flushes thy cheek,’ said the Saracen, ‘ I will drink, and that handsome person of thine shall be hung like that of a dead dog before my castle.’ ”

“ And as the Arab said this he unloosed the folds of the turban, which he, like all others of his nation wear around the head, and casting it as a mark of bondage upon the Bishop’s neck, he there tried to fasten it. The Bishop’s blood was at once aroused, by the indignity thus done to him as a Prince, and a Prelate, and therefore on the instant, and with one blow of his clenched hand direct in the face of his adversary, he stretched him prostrate and apparently lifeless upon the earth, and as he did so, he shouted aloud over the fallen caitiff— ‘ No—but thou shalt suffer the fitting punishment for thy impiety ; because blasphemous idolater as thou art thou hast presumed to place thy impure hands upon a consecrated priest of the Lord.’ ”

“ Oh ! brave Bishop Gunther of Bamberg ! ”

exclaimed Bernhard the Forester, unable to restrain his feelings of admiration. "Oh! thrice brave bishop! for that one act alone, thou well deservest canonization; and if thou art not yet in Heaven, I say from the bottom of my heart, brave bishop—may the Lord have mercy on thy soul!"

"Amen!" was the universal response of all present, from the old Abbot, to the youngest maiden that listened to the tale of the pilgrim.

It was the only interruption experienced by the narrator on the part of his auditors, who now gathered more closely around him anxious to hear what were the consequences to the Bishop of Bamberg, and his Christian companions after this act of courage.

"No sooner," continued the pilgrim, "did the priests and clerks who were in the room with the Bishop, perceive the Arab chief thus prostrate on the earth than they pounced upon him; and not

only upon him, but upon all his infidel companions at the same instant, and then before any one of these could recover from the surprise of so sudden, so unlooked for, and so unexpected an attack, they found themselves prisoners, with their hands tied behind their backs, and that so tightly, that the blood burst forth from the finger ends of not a few. The priests and clerks intimated at the same moment to those in the room below, what they had done. The example was there imitated with the Arab chiefs, who were instantly bound ; and we laymen hearing what had so unexpectedly occurred, uplifted our voices in one joyful, soul-inspiring hurra ! And then invoking to our aid the strong arm of our God, we again seized our weapons, again rallied together, and again made such a fierce and desperate onslaught upon our foes, that we each felled a man to the earth, and again made on all sides around our temporary fortress

a wide and vacant space, in which there was nought to be seen but the maimed, or lifeless bodies of our adversaries.

“ Amazement and terror alike fell upon the Arabs at this unexpected attack. At first, they could not divine what it signified, and then they conjectured that we had put their generals to death, and under this impression, they were seen collecting their forces together, for the purpose of pouring in upon us, and overwhelming us by their numbers. What they intended to do was well surmised on our part, and what think you was then done by us ? We had all our prisoners, pinioned as they were, dragged up on the flat, stone roof of the house, so that they might be distinctly seen and recognized by every one in the plain beneath—to each of these was assigned a headsman, who stood over him, with a drawn sword ; and, at the same time, proclamation was made on our part to the infidels, through the interpreter, that on the first hostile movement made

against us, they should behold the heads of their chief, and of his generals fall beneath the swords of their respective executioners.

At the same instant, the prisoners themselves appealed in piteous tones to their followers not to advance, which was sure to end in their destruction, for that they were in the hands of desperate men, who were resolved to take the lives of their adversaries, before they could be deprived of their own.

“The son of the chief—he who had been appointed to keep watch at the gates of our fortress—did much in appeasing the rage of our adversaries, by representing to them that the arms they discharged against us would be certainly fatal to his father and his companions.

“This was our position—we held the Arab chiefs determined to destroy them ; whilst on the other hand, we were beset by an army against whose numbers we could not contend with any hope of victory

“It was whilst we were so placed that there crept into our fortress a man who came from Ramula, to announce to us that one of the governors of the Kingdom of Babylon was approaching with a large army to our relief—that this governor had been apprised, through a few of our wounded companions who had escaped, naked as they were, from the first conflict near Ramula, of the manner in which we had been attacked, and that though an infidel, he was determined on aiding the Christians against the ruthless Pagans, who sought to rob and murder us.

“The succour, thus promised, arrived almost as speedily as it had been announced; and no sooner did our assailants behold the army of the King advancing than they instantly dispersed, as if the life of each depended upon the swiftness with which he could vanish from our view.

“As soon as the Governor of the King entered our fortress, and our prisoners were presented to him, than he recognized

them as leaders of bands of robbers who had long harassed the inhabitants and spoliated the country. He thanked us for the good we had done in capturing them, and directed that they should be sent, bound as they were, to the King, to receive at his hands condign punishment, whilst in gratitude for our services, he not only supplied us with abundance of provisions, but granted us an escort, by which we were conducted in safety to Jerusalem.

“At Jerusalem we were received with all fitting honour by the Venerable Patriarch Sophronius. Our arrival was welcomed with the tinkling sounds of cymbals, and by a torch-light procession——”

The Pilgrim's tale was here abruptly brought to a close by loud, piercing shrieks that came from out of the depths of the forest, which, though distant, were so expressive of fear and horror, that the stoutest heart quailed at their sound.

The serfs started to their feet with terror, and looked in each others' faces, affrighted

to find upon all the same expression of vague apprehension and dismay.

“Good Lord protect us!” said the Abbot Meginherr, who was the first to speak ; “what can be the meaning of all this !”

“It means,” said the Pilgrim, “that some scandalous outrage is committing--that here, as elsewhere, the strong arm is oppressing the weak--that brutal ruffianism, combined with power, is glutting its will in the agonies of its victims. I know the sounds well—I have often heard them before, and never did they reach my ear, that I did not thank my God that I was a Christian, a man and a soldier. But this is not a time for surmises, but for deeds. Away, ye serfs, to your huts—seize your swords, or if you have not swords, anything that has an edge and a point, for the head and heart of a villain. And you, Bernhard—you who can track the wolf, and front him boldly too, now hie thee to the forest, and bring us speedily intelligence

where we may fight for virtue, and against villany ; and should the opportunity offer, hesitate not to bring us back the head of a human wolf.”

“ No blood—no blood—I will have no blood of man shed, by serf of mine,” said the Abbot Meginherr.

“ No, father,” answered the pilgrim, and assuming in such a conjuncture as this, that which had plainly been his ancient habit of command in warfare ; “ no—not a single drop—not as much blood as an angry cat’s claw would elicit from the chubby finger of a wanton, playsome, urchin ; except it be in defence of Christianity, the church, innocence, or morality—of the wives, the children, and the homes of your serfs. But, if the serpent will attack you, and the wild beast fly at you—I care not whether he wear mottled skin, or iron-shelled jerkin, or appear before me with head of shaggy hair, or shining helmet—excuse me, father, if in my own defence and yours—I maim or massacre him outright.”

“Sir Pilgrim,” said the abbot, “I perceive that thou art a soldier ; and if, as thou sayest, my peaceful people are unjustly attacked, I entrust their defence to thee. In the absence of my knights, I give to thee, on this occasion, the command over my serfs. God grant that I may have only to admire thy courage, without having to witness thy prowess !”

Such was the prayer of the Abbot Meginherr ; but it was not destined to be fulfilled ; for whilst he spoke, and even before the forester, Bernhard, could have proceeded a bow-shot distance from the pilgrim, there was witnessed a scene, which held Abbot, and pilgrim, and Bernhard, breathless.

Issuing out of the forest, and pushing her fleet and light-limbed palfrey up the steep hill towards the monastery, a young female appeared. She was followed by about twenty horsemen—all dressed in green, and all wearing helmets, undecorated

with plumage or ornament of any description, but glistening as if they were composed of molten silver—all had light spears, shields, and short swords, and the horses that they rode seemed to have been selected more from their speed than their strength. As long as the pursuers and the pursued were upon the level soil, the latter, either from the superior speed of her palfry, or her better knowledge of the ground, had the advantage ; but of those advantages she was manifestly deprived when she began to ascend the acclivity.

“The female, whoever she is, is seeking sanctuary in the monastery,” observed the Abbot.

“She is seeking protection for her innocence against ruffian violence,” remarked the Pilgrim ; “but that her steed will never win for her. Her fate is inevitable. I know not who she may be ; but I can tell her destiny.”

“Then thou art a magician !” remarked

Bernhard, shrinking back from the side of the pilgrim, to which he had returned.

“No, Bernhard ; but I am a man who has eyes to see, and ears to hear with, and who can reason upon what I both see and hear. I know these men by their helmets—they are the horsemen of Worms—those who call themselves the body-guards of King Henry—the panders to his vices, and the ready instruments of all his passions. This female, although I cannot recognise at this distance a feature in her face, is, I can tell thee, young and beautiful—as young, but not, I am sure, as beautiful as her of whom those golden-shaded hairs remind me—and she has had the misfortune of being seen and admired by King Henry himself, or by one of his myrmidons, and they are now in pursuit of her to capture a new victim for his brutality. But see—it is as I told you—they are before and behind her ! And oh !—look !

she stops her steed in despair—and now, —good Heavens ! she is fainting—she will be killed by falling from her horse ! Alas ! alas ; that such deeds should be done in the face of day—and that Heaven can permit them, since man has neither the strength to prevent nor the power punish them.”

“ Thou art wrong, Sir Pilgrim,” said Bernhard, “ the lady has not fallen to the earth. She has been caught by two of the horsemen. And now, see, they have all clustered in a body around her. They are, I suppose, consulting what they will do. They will not bring her to the monastery, that is certain ; for the heads of all are turned away from it—and see, they are now guiding her in this direction. Observe them now arranging themselves like a squadron four a-breast, and as sure as I am a forester, they are conveying their captive hitherwards, and will march her straight through the hamlet.”

‘ And wherefore through the hamlet,

Bernhard ? Can they hope to be received here as friends ?” enquired the Pilgrim.

“ No, no,” answered the forester. “ We know nought here of the citizens of Worms, of their pranks, or their crimes ; but they conduct her through this hamlet because it is the straight road to the river, where if thou wilt turn thy eyes, thou mayest perceive there are several strange boats now lying.”

“ Poor creature ! poor innocent, and unoffending victim !” exclaimed the Pilgrim, “ but one last desperate effort can be made on thy behalf. Have I thy permission, Father Abbot, to make it, and to save thy territory from the reproach that so scandalous an outrage as this can be committed upon it, with impunity ?”

“ Thou hast my full permission, sanction and authority,” said the Abbot. “ To rescue virtue from the fangs of vice is a duty imposed upon every Christian, and to shrink from performing it is to be guilty of a grievous sin. Whilst then thou usest

the arm of the flesh, I will contend for thee by prayer—humble prayer, that God may be pleased to reward thy valour with victory—and that thy virtue may be crowned with glory both in this world and the next.”

And so saying, the feeble old man arose—knelt down before the chair on which he had previously been sitting—detached his crucifix from his girdle, and placing it erect before him on the chair, and clasped between his two hands, he was soon so lost in prayer and meditation, that every circumstance that subsequently occurred was alike unheard and unregarded by him.

“Bernhard,” said the Pilgrim, “on thy coolness and steadiness, I place my main reliance for success in the coming struggle. Hast thou a quick eye and a firm nerve?”

“Since I was a boy, I never yet missed what I aimed at. I can wait for the wolf until he is within two yards of me,” was the brief answer of Bernhard.

“ That is well,” said the Pilgrim ; “ and now mark what I say to thee. Let this body of horsemen come within twenty yards of thee. . There,” said he, pointing to a hut which advanced some distance into the road, and, with a projecting buttress upon the outer side, made the path at that spot more narrow and confined than in any other portion of the hamlet “ *There*—when the horseman, who rides in the centre of the group, and on the right hand of the female, reaches that spot—take aim at him—at whatever thou likest best—heart, visage, or helmet—but let it be such an aim as that thy arrow will be sure to unhorse him—do this when thou hearest me say, ‘ the Lord have mercy on thy soul ’—count then three slowly to thyself, and let thy arrow go. Whatever else occur, get thou quickly by my side, draw thy stout sword—fancy thou hast not men before thee, but wild beasts, *for they are wild beasts*, and cut them down as quickly as thou canst ; be

sure that the more of their blood thou sheddest, the less of foul crimes wilt thou have upon the fair face of God's earth."

Bernhard disappeared from the side of the pilgrim, who saw himself now surrounded by all the men and women of the hamlet.

"Women," said the pilgrim, "fly ye out of the hamlet. You can do no good here, and may occasion much harm, if the rude soldiers, who are about to pass here, should see your fair faces. It might cause you to be torn away from father, mother, husband, brother, lover, or children. Should you hear the sounds of a combat, do not appear, until there is no other cry coming forth, than the sad wailing of wounded men. Then there ye will be wanted, and then only your presence can be useful to friend or foe. Away then and hide yourselves, where best you can, from the sight of a ribald soldiery."

These orders were obeyed. The pilgrim then looked to see how his new

soldiers were arrayed. He found that a few had swords, others hatchets, others forks, others spears, others reaping hooks, and that two or three stout, young fellows had brought out plough-shares. These men he planted some behind the walls of the projecting houses, so as not to be visible to the horsemen when advancing from the opposite side of the hamlet : and others he placed in the houses out of view, and to all he gave his commands in these few brief words :—

“ My brave men of Aschaffenburg—I am sorry to place such stout soldiers as you are out of the view of an enemy ; but the truth is, that badly equipped as you are, a thousand of you could not withstand for two minutes the solid charge of twenty experienced horsemen armed with spears. Our only chance with them, is for you to attack them unexpectedly from all sides : back and front, sides and rear : but mind—not a man of you is to stir until you see

one of their men unhorsed. The moment that occurs—rush at them—do not try to strike a man of them in the breast, for there you will only be hammering or probing at a cuirass—aim as well as you can at their faces—and if you are not tall enough for that, then at their stomachs—and if you cannot do that, try and hamstring their horses. You are not to strike a blow until you see one horseman down; but the instant you see that, then stab, hackle, cut and slash away at them until you get them all down. And now, away, for they are fast approaching us.”

The ready, lightsome, cheerful, and punctual spirit, with which the Pilgrim observed his orders were fulfilled inspired him with an almost confident hope, that the effort which he was about to make would be crowned with success.

In a few minutes he saw the horsemen entering the village, and he, at the same instant, perceived that not only the face,

but nearly the figure of the female was completely concealed by a robe which, fashioned like a monk's habit, covered her face with its cowl, and disguised the garments worn beneath by its ample folds. His practised eye shewed him too, that the preparations he had been making for their reception had not altogether escaped the notice of the horsemen ; for they advanced slowly, and steadily, and in perfect order, and each man firmly grasping his spear, as if prepared to make a charge upon any body of persons, that might be arrayed against them for the purpose of impeding their march.

The Pilgrim, who stood in front of the Abbot, so as to guard the venerable man, by his own person, from the possibility of any injury reaching him, here stepped forward so far into the high road as to attract upon himself the attention of the horsemen. His doing so brought him in advance of the projecting huts, so as to be on a

line with the spot to which he had directed the attention of Bernhard.

The unwonted silence of the hamlet evidently appalled the horsemen. Their loud talk, which was heard as they passed the first houses, became, as if by general consent, completely hushed, so that by the time they had drawn near to where the Pilgrim stood, not a sound was to be heard but the regular tramp of the horses' feet in the centre of the road. The horsemen looked at the Pilgrim, but did not deem it necessary to bestow even a passing word upon him. He waited until the central group was on the point of passing him, and then there was heard a word pronounced in a voice so distinct, and clear that the hamlet rung again with the sound. It was the simple word—"halt."

The word, as pronounced by the lips of the Pilgrim was involuntary, almost unconsciously obeyed by the horsemen; for soldiers as they were, they could not fail to

recognize that it was given forth by one long accustomed to command, in many a hard-fought field.

“Who bids *us* halt?” inquired the commander of the troop, recovering from the momentary surprise into which he had been cast.

“I do,” said the Pilgrim ; “and it is to demand of thee and thy followers, in the name of the Lord Abbot of Aschaffenburg, within whose district thou now art, why and wherefore thou hast, without his sanction, first presumed to arrest this maiden, and then, having arrested her, why thou hast not brought the captive before him, in order that he might ascertain whether or not she can provide herself with compurgators, by which her innocence of the charge alleged against her may be demonstrated.”

“Sir Pilgrim,” sneeringly answered the Commander of the horsemen, “it may suffice the good Abbot of Aschaffenburg to know that we are soldiers of the loyal city

of Worms ; that we have banished our own bishop from our city, because he was not obedient to King Henry ; and that we care as little for thy Abbot ; that we trample upon his authority ; that we defy his power, and that we have arrested this female, not because we allege that she has done to others or to us aught of wrong ; but because it is our pleasure to make her our captive. This is our sole answer to the question put to us by a wandering pilgrim, on behalf of the fasting, psalm-singing, discipline-using Abbot of Aschaffenburg."

"Then as thy sole reply," said the Pilgrim, advancing towards the troop, "I say to thee, miserable man—may the Lord have mercy on thy soul!"

The Commander of the troop looked down with contempt upon the Pilgrim, and then gazing direct before him, he pointed with his sword, and seemed about to pronounce the word, "onward," when he was seen to fall seemingly lifeless to the earth, and at the same moment a crash was heard ;

but the fall seemed to precede the riving noise that was made as an arrow-head tore its way through his polished helmet. At the same moment the sword of the fallen man was seized by the Pilgrim, and before the man's companion could recover from his surprise, a vigorous lunge with the same sword, now wielded by the Pilgrim's hand, sent that companion senseless to the earth.

As the leader of the troop fell, a clamorous and raging crowd of armed serfs burst out upon all sides on the horsemen. The horsemen confused, and assailed without sufficient space to use their spears, had to draw their swords, and aiming as well as they could down upon the unguarded heads of the serfs, at length effected their escape, each man, however, bearing with him a wound, and leaving as the result of this short and desperate conflict, three of their men dead in the hamlet, and finding that their female captive had been rescued from them.

The fugitive horsemen, retreated back to that part of the hamlet by which they had first appeared, as it was the only place that they could perceive to be free from assailants. Here the men rallied, and recovering in a few minutes from the panic fear with which they had been first seized, they staunched their bleeding wounds, and as they did so, he who seemed to be the second in command, observed :

“ A sad day’s works this—four of our men killed in as many seconds.”

“ Nay, but three,” replied a soldier ; “ I noticed that our commander, Lieman, had no blood upon his face as he fell. The arrow that shot him down could have only stunned him ; but I warrant he will, from such a knock as that, have a head-ache for a week to come.”

“ I doubt it much, comrade,” said the second Commander. “ Let us but return to the King, without that female, and neither Lieman, nor any man here will

this day week have a head upon his shoulders. Better the sledge hammer of a serf, than endure what, perchance, may be our own lot, a lingering death by torture under the practised hand of King Henry's headsman. But mark! something strange has occurred amongst our foes. They are all, in dismay, clustering under a tree, and they have left alone and in the middle of the road, that demon-pilgrim, and our captive. Now then is the moment to make a charge upon them whilst they are in confusion. We have two things to choose between, death in the hamlet, or death on the scaffold. If we succeed we shall have full purses—if we fail, we choose the easier death."

"Charge, Egen, charge for your life," said the Commander Lieman, here running up to his men. "I have done something to distract the attention of the serfs. Soldiers! let the four in the first line set your lances all at the pilgrim—run him through on the spot—let the four next carry off the

woman living or dead—and as to the remainder draw your swords, cut right and left until we get back to the river bank. I will meet you there as best I can—*charge.*”

The order was readily and promptly obeyed by desperate men, who felt that their only chance of saving their lives depended upon the success of the effort they were then about to make.

The pilgrim, the moment that he saw unhorsed the two leaders of the troop, caught hold of the female, who was absolutely senseless from terror, and lifting her from her palfrey, he bore her out of the thick of the *melée*, wheeling, as he did so, his sword around him, and inflicting a desperate gash upon every horse, or horseman that came within its swing. He saw that his brave rustics did their work heartily—that the troop in one moment was in utter confusion, and in the next completely routed. He stepped, with as little sense of compassion for the fallen

soldiers, over their blood-stained gashed bodies, as if they were so many logs of timber that lay in his path, and then gently setting the woman down, that she might rest upon one of the benches that had been used by the serfs, whilst sitting and listening to his tale, he, with the intention of giving to the poor bewildered captive some air, removed the deep cowl, which up to that moment had concealed her features.

No sooner, however, did his eyes rest upon those delicate features, that snow white skin, those pouting lips, and the long inky, black eye-lashes which concealed from him the full dark eyes, than he started back involuntarily, as if he had been the witness to some wondrous miracle, in which is exhibited at once the Almighty power, goodness and mercy of the Creator.

“Oh, God! oh, God! can this be true,” he exclaimed. “Is this not a dream?—a dream of years, and one, that I could

hardly hope would ever be realised. But can it be—that I see her now—see her at last,—and oh, God!—she is dead—but no—no—to think that is to doubt of God’s goodness. It is but a swoon—water! good Bernhard!—hasten with water—as for me, I cannot venture to take my eyes from this face. Bernhard, some water quickly.”

Bernhard did not hear the Pilgrim. He was far away from him beneath the spreading tree. It was the only order the Pilgrim gave to him that day, which was not, on the instant, obeyed by Bernhard.

The Pilgrim continued to look on the beauteous creature that still lay senseless before him. At length she was heard to sigh—then gently moved, and then opened her eyes, but shrank back appalled from the Pilgrim, for she perceived that he had seized one of her hands, and was covering it with kisses.

“ Ah !” said the Pilgrim, “ I see thou

canst not know me, concealed as I am beneath this strange garb. Dost thou not know me then ?”

“ Know *thee*,” said Beatrice, for it was she who had been thus rescued, and in whose speaking features were portrayed perplexity and surprise ; “ know *thee*, Sir Pilgrim—how is it possible I should know thee since I have until this moment never before looked upon thee ?”

“ Not know me !—” such were the words uttered by the Pilgrim ; but he was permitted to say no more. The rally of the horsemen outside the village—the movements of Lieman upon being restored to his senses—the agitation and the commotion of the serfs—the escape of Lieman—the return to the attack of the horsemen were alike unheeded once the unveiled features of Beatrice were looked upon by the Pilgrim. They were as completely unnoticed, as the advance of the horsemen was unheard by him, when they came clattering at full charge up the high road, and

four horsemen ran at him full tilt, striking him at the same moment with their lances. Of the four lances that struck him, the shafts of three shivered to pieces, and the resistance to the fourth was so great, that the trooper was unhorsed. The blows, however, were well aimed, for having carried the Pilgrim onward for a short distance, they flung him to the earth with the blood gushing from his mouth. As he fell—for there was none other in all that hamlet who now raised a sword in her behalf—the shrieking Beatrice was again seized on, and carried off to the river. She was swept away by her ravishers as unheeded by the serfs of Aschaffenburg, as if they had but plucked from the soil some noxious weed, and borne it to the water's edge.

And why, it may be asked, were those, who had but a few minutes before perilled life and limb to rescue Beatrice from the hands of the ruffian soldiers of Worms, now so utterly forgetful of her? For the

same reason that has ever made mankind selfish in the midst of an overwhelming calamity : because when the heart is smitten by some awful and astounding grief, it appears to be deprived of the capability of compassionating the sorrow of another, which, though as great as its own to the sufferer, is unlike to it, in its nature and degree.

The serfs of Aschaffenburg thought not of fighting in defence of Beatrice, for the hamlet in which they dwelt had been polluted by a sacriligious murder !

No sooner had the perfidious Lieman recovered his senses from the blow which had stricken him to the earth, and perceived that his troop had been completely routed, and the attention of the Pilgrim engaged with Beatrice, than he snatched from the ground the arrow that had felled him, and rushed at the Abbot, who was still on his knees, and engaged in prayer ; and instigated by the fell spirit of the new sect “ the Paterini,” of which he was

a member he experienced a malignant pleasure in directing the weapon, with such a fearful aim into the back of his victim, that the arrow head went right through the heart, and, at length, caught in the wood of the crucifix which was, in the momentary pang of death, drawn closely up to the good old man's breast.

And thus was the venerable Abbot Meginherr, discovered by his serfs—dead, in the attitude of prayer—and with his own crucifix nailed to his heart—his pure blood oozing out on the image of his Saviour to Whose service he had devoted the eighty years of his sinless, stainless, ever-loving, ever-pure, and ever-faithful life !

To gaze horror-stricken upon such a sight as this, was the grief of griefs to the poor serfs of Aschaffenburg, and they had neither hearts to feel nor thoughts to give to the misfortunes of another—and that too, a stranger who could never be as afflicted as they were for the death of the Abbot ; for they had been *his serfs*.

He had been their lord, their master, their father, their protector, their friend, their adviser, their consoler. There was not a hand there that he had not enriched by his bounty ; there was not a tongue there that had not blessed him for his thoughtfulness and his affection ; there was not an ear there that had not heard from him the sweet words of consolation in this world, and of hope for the world to come. To them he had been all in all, and yet almost in their presence, he had been brutally massacred !

All—men, women, and children, knelt down and prayed around the dead body of Meginherr the Lord Abbot of Aschaffenburg.

Bernhard the forester, recognised in the dead body of the Abbot his own arrow—he remembered too the face of him whose life he had spared in the battle.

Bernhard the forester, knelt with the other serfs ; but he did not pray—*he made a vow*—and that was a vow that he would

have by fair means if he could, and if not by foul—aye, foul as the deed itself—and with the same arrow too—the life of his lord's assassin.

CHAPTER V.

THE SERF.

THE clamour of battle had been succeeded by the sobs of men, and the piercing shrieks of women and children. Both noises had reached the inhabitants of the monastery on the topmost point of the hill, and they were speedily seen descending its declivity, priests and monks as they were, and hurrying to the hamlet of the serfs, hopeful that by their presence they might bring

spiritual consolation to the dying, and help to the wounded.

With such intentions they came, and those amongst them who were practised in surgery, (and not a few of them were so), soon found employment for their skill on the wounded heads, gashed arms and dislocated shoulders of the serfs—others, betook themselves with tears, to the care of the mortal remains of the slain Meginherr, whilst a few raised from the earth, the apparently lifeless body of the Pilgrim. To their surprise they found him breathing although still senseless. They removed his habit for the purpose of seeing where he had been wounded ; and then to their astonishment they discovered that the Pilgrim's body was covered with a coat of mail, worn close to the skin, and without leathern doublet beneath it,

“Phew!” exclaimed a youthful monk at this sight ; “this is a strange garment for a pilgrim ! This man has plainly more confidence in his iron-shirt, than his *pater-*

nosters for protection against the assaults of the wicked ones of this world."

"Brother, brother," remarked Leopold, an old monk, "be careful, that thy jest is not a sin ; and that what thou makest a mockery of is not a reproach to thy own tepidity."

"Assuredly brother, thou dost not intend to affirm," replied the younger monk, "that coats of mail are not far more fitted for warriors, than for penitents."

"Alas ! brother," meekly answered the elder monk, "when years have brought to thee more sense and reflection than thou hast at present, thou wilt then perceive that nought in this world is so inventive as piety, in discovering the aptest means of chastising the body, and keeping it in perfect subjection. The dark skin, the black eye-brows, although his hair is white as snow, of this pilgrim, conjoined with his noble and regular features, serve as proofs, that he is by birth a Roman—a true type of one of the ancient conquerors of the

Universe. Now it may be, that this very man has been at Fontavellano, at the foot of the Appenines in Umbria, where the renowned Peter Damian has a hermitage or monastery conducted according to the rules of St. Bennet, and where, I am told, there is to be found a monk named Dominic, who has been surnamed ‘*Loricatus*,’ because he always, as a mortification, wears next his skin, a rough iron coat of mail. Perchance, the Pilgrim has been there—has seen Dominic, or has heard of him; and has imitated his example. The very circumstance then that has provoked thy smiles ought rather to have elicited thy reverence. May it, at least, serve as a warning to thee in these wicked times, and in this corrupt age, when bad priests chaffer for dignities in the church, and fancy that the gifts of God’s altars are to be procured by the instrumentality of filthy lucre. The holy Dominic, whom this pilgrim, I suppose imitates, has, although dignified with the priesthood, al-

ways refused to exercise sacerdotal functions, ever since he discovered that the bishop, by whom he was ordained, had, for discharging that duty, received a present from his parents. My dear brother, since the sin of simony is now so prevalent, let the example of the good Dominic be a warning to thee."

"It shall be so—it shall be so," replied the young monk, who now stood abashed in presence of the elder.

"We have, by chance, discovered the pious practice of the pilgrim," observed the elder monk, "let us then respect his secret, and not betray it. Cover his body again with his habit, lest others observe that which we have seen. Thou art better skilled in medicine than I—thinkest thou, he will ever recover from his mortal swoon?"

"He is even now recovering ; and in a few minutes his senses will be restored to him. He has," said the young monk, "re-

ceived four bruises. The spear-points could not break through this thick and skilfully twisted coat of mail. The force, however, with which they were driven has caused severe contusions, and to these is to be added a bad fall, by which one of the small blood vessels has been injured. Quick—brothers !” he shouted aloud to his fellow monks—“this pilgrim must be carried to our infirmary. We must have the best leeches in the monastery to attend him. In three weeks I hope to see him restored to perfect health.”

Whilst this conversation was taking place in one part of the hamlet, the Prior of the monastery was to be seen in another, making enquiry into the circumstances that had led to the murder of the Abbot Meginherr. The confused narrative of the serfs was unintelligible to him, and he had at last to summon the forester Bernhard to his presence, and to require him to give, fully and distinctly, an ac-

count of all that had been said and done, from the moment he himself had quitted the hamlet until his return.

With this demand, Bernhard strictly and literally complied. He told all, even the most minute circumstance that had made an impression on his mind, and concluded his recapitulation of those different events, with these words :

“ I have, Sir Prior, but one thing to regret—and that is my womanish weakness—that criminal dislike on my part to shed human blood ; for when I was aiming at the Commander of the troop, I could have shot him through the eye, and brain, as easily as I unhorsed him. I spared him his life, and the very arrow that had so spared him, he took up and used it against my loved lord and master.”

“ So, sirrah !” replied the Prior Croft, “ according to your own story, you are a traitor ; for you have been fighting against the King’s troops—seeking to rescue a King’s prisoner, and, in the conflict you

yourself provoked, for you were the first to discharge a weapon, your lord has been slain."

"Sir Prior," said Bernhard, "I am, as thou but too well knowest, a mere serf. It is my duty to obey my lord: if he be wrong, (and I think the Abbot Meginherr—to whose soul God be merciful!—never did wrong) but supposing he did, the responsibility would rest upon him, and not upon me. I am bound to obey my superior I did so—even by not killing the miscreant, as I knew the Abbot would, if it were possible, have no serf of his shed human blood."

"How know I that this is not a falsehood?—Why am I to presume that Abbot Meginherr gave orders for attacking the troops of Worms?" asked the Prior.

"Because," replied Bernhard, "the whole hamlet heard them given."

"But then, slave as thou art, it is with thy arrow that the Abbot is found slain," said the Prior, glaring at his sturdy serf.

“What is there to prevent thy being condemned as his murderer?”

“Much, Sir Prior,” said Bernhard, to whom this horrible accusation caused feelings of disgust and indignation, which he found it difficult to suppress, and could not fully conceal. “Much, Sir Prior. First, there will be found no one vile enough and withal brave enough to be my accuser. There can be no conviction without an accusation. And, secondly, there is scarcely a single man in the hamlet, who is not aware, that as long as the battle lasted I was not near to the Abbot, but fighting by the side of the Pilgrim; and that the battle was scarcely brought to a close, until the Abbot was found murdered; and that so far removed was I from him, that I was, I believe, the last of his serfs who heard that most sad intelligence.”

“Thou art nimble of tongue, Bernhard—but beware! I do not forget thy pertness—and if I should become Abbot of Aschaffenburg, a heavier task will be im-

posed upon thee, than that of roving in the forest, or idling in the village as thou listest. The Abbot Croft will be a far different lord from the Abbot Meginherr," remarked the Prior.

"We never expect to see on this earth such an Abbot as the good Father Meginherr," replied Bernhard. "And when thou art our Abbot, we shall offer up our prayers to him, as our patron saint, to protect us from undue exactions."

"Insolent villain!" exclaimed the enraged Prior, "for this impertinence thou shalt yet feel brand and whip."

"I meant not to offend thee, Sir Prior," was the answer of Bernhard. "Thou didst threaten, and I prophesied. But it becometh not an inferior to bandy words with his superior. I am aware that until the pleasure of the King be known, that thou wilt be the administrator of the temporalities of the monastery. Conscious as I am of this, and seeing that thou dislikest me, I have a request to make of thee."

“Seeing that I dislike thee, thou hast a request to make of me !” said the Prior, at the same time angry and puzzled. “Then be assured I will not grant it.”

“Yes,” said the Forester, “I have made a vow, and it is necessary for me to fulfill it. I cannot do so, if I remain attached to the soil of Aschaffenburg, and am liable to be punished as a fugitive slave, if found beyond the precincts, without permission from the Abbot—and you, being Abbot, would never give it. Now, my reason for believing you will grant my request is this—that it will be for your advantage to do so.”

“My advantage, ha!” exclaimed the Prior. “My advantage. Thou said’st so. For *my* advantage. Very well—proceed, Bernhard—I am prepared to listen to thee.”

“Yes—for *thy* advantage. I am prepared to offer thee money,” continued Bernhard.

“Money ! money ! gold coin is it, Bernhard ?” eagerly enquired the Prior.

“Aye--good, shining, golden crowns !” said Bernhard.

“And are they all thine own, Bernhard ?” asked the Prior in amazement.

“Aye, Prior, every piece of them—they are the savings of a long, thrifty, and sober life,” said Bernhard, somewhat proudly.

“The savings of a serf are the goods of his lord, if he choose to seize on them,” said the Prior.

“Yes—if the serf be not wise enough, when he knows the disposition of his lord, to conceal them where they cannot be found,” replied Bernhard.

“True—true—I forgot that,” was the somewhat angry answer of the Prior, annoyed to perceive that his avarice might be disappointed, and himself outwitted even by an ignorant serf. “But for what, Bernhard, dost thou propose to offer me thy gold ?”

“For my freedom,” bluntly replied Bernhard.

“For *thy freedom!*” exclaimed the Prior, almost out of breath with surprise at such an unusual proposition. “For thy freedom! Thou dreamest, or ravest, or hast drunk too much wine, when thou talkest thus. Thou never canst possibly have saved a sufficient sum to purchase thine own freedom. Dost thou remember that thou art of great value to our monastery, as our forester? We cannot part with thee at a low price. I place much value upon thee, Bernhard—as a *serf*—and I must have a swinging sum from thee, before I make thee free. Thou never canst have so much money, as I shall ask for thee.”

“Nay—nay, Prior Croft,” said Bernhard, “although I do think thee a hard man to deal with—I do not suppose that where thou mayst have golden coins in thy hand, thou wilt refuse a fair bargain, and require for the horse, or cow, or serf, more

than their value. Supposing any of the serfs here had been slain in the late combat, thou wouldst be sure to pursue their murderers until thou hadst received the blood-fine for them. For the carpenter thou wouldst have asked forty shillings ; for a ploughman thirty shillings ; for the blacksmith fifty shillings ; for the silver-smith one hundred shillings ; and for that rare goldsmith, whose labours have won a fame even for Aschaffenburg monastery, thou couldst not ask, for the law would not permit thee to do so, more than one hundred and fifty shillings. It is true, the living serf must be of more value to thee than the dead one, and, therefore, I put a higher price upon myself as being uninjured, than if I were maimed, or than thou couldst demand from my slayers, if I had fallen in the conflict ; and, therefore, do I tender to thee, ten golden crowns for my freedom."

"Ten ! golden ! crowns !" cried the Prior, pausing, as if in admiration upon

each particular word — “Ten golden crowns ! and so much money saved by one particular serf ! Oh ! how the monastery-chest must have been defrauded during the long reign of the simple Meginherr ! Why, if one has saved so much, there must be a mine of wealth concealed somewhere about the hamlet, by the serfs. But I shall discover, and recover it too, somehow or another, I warrant. Mark what I say, Bernhard,” he said, turning to the serf, “I know thou hast many kinsmen in the hamlet. If they wish for thy freedom, they must contribute their savings to purchase it. How much, thinkest thou, can be collected from them ?”

“I know not,” replied Bernhard, “but this I tell thee now, once, and for all, that if a single shilling, collected out of the savings of a hundred of them, could procure my freedom, I would not take it from them, and for these reasons—first, to fulfil my vow, it is necessary I should publicly renounce all my relations. It

will be the act with which I shall initiate my freedom, if ever I am a free man ; and secondly, I will never, myself,—help to impoverish those, who, whatever they have saved, have only collected it by pinching themselves continually and by subjecting themselves to many a bitter and painful deprivation. It is thus, and thus only, that I have gathered together the ten golden crowns that I now tender to thee, if thou wilt make me free.”

“Begone! serf as thou art—and serf as thou ever shalt remain, unless, instead of ten, thou canst bring to me one hundred crowns in solid, good, red, gold. Begone, I say,” cried the Prior, flinging himself back in the chair where the good Meginherr had sat, and in front of which he had died.

“I go, Sir Prior,” said Bernhard, bending his knee to his angry master. “I go—and as I must now for ever despair of obtaining my freedom—in ten minutes my

ten golden crowns shall be cast into the waters of the Maine or the Aschaff, and those who love wealth may fish for them in either place, in the hope of finding them.

“Ten golden crowns—and saved by a single serf!” Thus spoke the Prior Croft to himself, as he sat in the Abbot Meginherr’s chair in the midst of the now deserted hamlet ; for all its inhabitants had accompanied the body of the Abbot in its funereal procession to the monastery. “Ten golden crows!” he thus soliloquised. “A fortune for such a caitiff! But at whose expense has that fortune been made? At that of the monastery—of *mine*—as the administrator of its revenues. And I want it all—more than it all. I want boundless riches, because my ambition is boundless, and I have a king, whose desire to possess gold is boundless as my ambition. Oh, Henry! Henry! German King, and Emperor as thou art, in all but the performance of an empty ceremony—how fortunate it is

that the German Church is ruled by one like thee! Thou bestowest not its mitres upon men who have nought to recommend them but their humility, their piety, or their virtue. No—thou art far more discriminating in thy choice. Thou lookest not to their deeds but their hands,—and if these be filled with gold, thou rewardest the giver fairly—for a little gold there is promotion; for much, an abbey; for more, a mitre; and for a vast deal, an archiepiscopal see; and, wherefore, should not I be yet an archbishop? Why not be able, like Adelbert, the Archbishop of Bremen, and king's favourite, to sieze upon rich abbeys, like that of Corbie, and pour into my own purse all the enormous wealth belonging to it? Why not laugh to derision, if I were even a prelate, the predictions of a pious idiot like Meginherr, when he told Burchard the Bishop of Magdeburg for seizing upon the tithes of the monastery in Herefield, that many months could not elapse before both would stand before

the judgment-seat of God, and that there he, Meginherr, would be his accuser for that spoliation? Poor Meginherr! he believed what he said, but the wiser bishop retained what he had the power to seize, and to hold it—as I would have done—as I still hope to do—as I am sure to do; for my riches are fast accumulating. Aye, even now, I have enough to buy me a bishopric. And wherefore not do so at once? Wherefore waste my time longer in this monastery? I have nearly exhausted it of its wealth. My cousin Werenher stands high in the King's favour—and then I have Henry's greatest favourite of all—gold. With a rich episcopal see I can accumulate money more quickly than here—and then—yes then assuredly I shall be an Archbishop—a Prince-Archbishop!—with nobles to wait upon me, with knights to guard me, with wealthy vassals to tender me fealty—with rich monasteries to seize upon—with all their jewels—their costly-covered books—their altar-vessels and

vestments encrusted with diamonds, and stiff with massy, solid gold——but eh! what is this!” exclaimed the Prior, starting to his feet, and falling back with a strong, oppressive sense of a swooning sickness upon him——“what *can* be the meaning of this!

“Why,” continued he, after pausing for a few moments——panting, exhausted, and with a creeping chill of terror in all his limbs——“why or wherefore is it, that when I let my mind rest upon these things——upon that archiepiscopal mitre to which I aspire——upon that richly-gemmed crozier that I yet expect to hold——upon the closely-concealed riches of monasteries, which I intend to rifle and to riot in——why is it that such thoughts are almost invariably followed by a sudden rush of blood to the head——that my brain appears for the moment to be plunged into a fervent mass of red hot flame——that there is then a sudden choking of the throat, as if some demon had seized upon and was

about to throttle me—and that all this is followed by that aching chill in every limb which makes me tremble, as if I were afflicted with palsy—tremble—as I do now.

“What can all this indicate? Let me think. If I were superstitious—if I believed in omens or forewarnings I would say—nay, I *must* say—that Heaven had sent these sudden dizzinesses upon me to intimate to me that I shall be short-lived.

“Short-lived! Can it be so! I, who have been ever careful of my health—by constitution free from all passion—and, from habit alone, untouched by any vice—who scarcely ever taste wine, who live on the simplest food—whose frame is strengthened by moderate toil, and whose cheek is ruddy with health—I short-lived, who am but in my fortieth year!—and who have this day seen, even in his eightieth winter, an old man die, not from age, but accident. But then the Abbot Meginherr’s heart was

not like to mine—it was not corroded by ambition, neither was it elevated by the aspiring thoughts that ambition generates.

“I live as moderately and temperately as Meginherr, and therefore it is reasonable to suppose—for I am a stouter, stronger, and more muscular man than ever he was—that my span of existence shall be prolonged to the same duration as his.

“Short-lived! Oh, it is absurd even to think of it . . . but then these sudden attacks. *He* never had them. He did not think—as *I* do. Aye, there it is—I must avoid those delicious thoughts which ambition presents so vividly to my heart. Their intensity induces such attacks. I must then avoid them. I must, for the future, think less and do more. I must convert these speculations into realities ; and when I do that, then my life must be as tranquil as that of Meginherr ; but I shall differ from him in this respect—his hairs

grew white in the contented obscurity of an Abbotical cowl, and I—I shall not feel old age coming upon me, amid the pomps of courts, the smiles of courtiers, the dazzling splendours of wealth and the favour of my sovereign.

“Yes, yes—I must think less than I do,” said the Prior Croft, and as he said so, losing himself so deeply in thought, that many minutes elapsed, before the quick and hasty tolling of all the bells in the monastery reached his ears, and aroused his attention to external circumstances.

“Bless me!” he cried, starting up from his seat like a man, whom a sudden noise at midnight awakes from a sound sleep. “Bless me! what is this, what is this! All the monastery bells would not be thus rung out if some disastrous circumstance had not occurred. I must hurry back, and enquire of the community what it means.”

And so saying, the Prior was seen

making all speed up the path that led to the great gate of the monastery ; but still nurturing as he went, those ambitious thoughts, on which his mind alone loved to dwell.

CHAPTER VI.

ANCIENT CUSTOMS.

ONE MONTH had elapsed from the day on which the good Abbot Meginherr had been slain.

There was an immense assembly of prelates, of nobles, of knights, of burghers, from various towns, and even of serfs from the adjoining districts, collected within the aisle and naves of the great church in the Monastery of Aschaffenburg. All these persons had gathered together with the

same object ; to join their prayers with those of the priests at the high altar, and the other altars in the church, and which were all offered up for the repose of the soul of the Abbot Meginherr, and of Burchard, the Bishop of Magdebourg, both of whom had expired on the same day, and both deprived suddenly of life ; the first, slain by an arrow ; the second, killed by a fall from his horse, and who, having been brought in a dying state into the Monastery of Aschaffenburg, had lived long enough, to express his sorrow for the unjust exactions he had practised upon several monasteries ; but especially for his spoliation of the tithes of Herefield, which had been the property of Meginherr as Abbot.

It was the sudden accident to the Bishop Burchard which had recalled the Prior Croft to the Monastery, and in him there was observable no change of manner, from the deaths of the Abbot and Bishop, but one : that ever since the Pilgrim in the

infirmery had sent for him, he was remarked to be constantly gazing at a small cross, which seemed to be but one solid mass of sparkling diamonds. From that day too, it was remarked by the monks in attendance upon the infirmery, that Bernhard the forester-serf passed more of his days there, than in the forest ; and that he was permitted, unreprieved by the Prior, to do so.

No sooner were the solemn ceremonies for the dead at an end, than it was intimated to all present, that their presence was required to witness the legal sale of a serf belonging to the monastery.

A few moments afterwards, three persons were seen ascending the steps of the high altar. These were the Prior Croft, the Pilgrim, and the serf, Bernhard. They turned round to the multitude, so that they might be known and recognised by all present. The serf, Bernhard, then knelt down by the side of the Prior, and placing the Prior's hand on his head, intimated that he

was the Prior's serf. The Prior then produced a parchment bearing his signature, and read its contents aloud. They were as follows :—

“This is to testify that I, Croft, Prior of the Abbey of Aschaffenburg, have sold, and do now sell to thee, Sir Pilgrim, this Bernhard, my serf, and at the same time dec're that he is not a thief, nor a run-away, nor labouring under any corporeal ailment ; but that he is sound alike in mind and body. I do hereby also testify by this instrument, that I have received from you the price of this serf—to wit, ten crowns of pure gold, and full weight, in exchange whereof, I now give up to you this serf to have, and to hold, and to do with him as thou wilt, now and henceforth. And I do also declare by this instrument, that if I do that, which is most improbable I would ever attempt to do—viz., that is by myself, or my legal representatives, in my name, invalidate this sale, or infringe upon

its conditions, then I, or they, shall be liable to a mulct of twenty golden crowns over and above, whatever may be the higher value of the serf at the time. And this is now subscribed by me, in order that this sale may ever be regarded as lasting, binding, and irrefragable.”

The ten crowns of gold—the very crowns of gold which Bernhard had saved and the Prior had previously refused, were now placed upon the altar, along with the deed of sale. The Count of the district then ascended the steps of the altar, and he gave to the Prior the gold, and to the Pilgrim he handed the charter.

The Pilgrim then turned to Bernhard, and Bernhard then knelt down before him, as he had done for the Prior Croft, but the Pilgrim eagerly stretched out his hand and said—

“Not for an instant can I permit a man like thee to remain in such a position. Here,” he continued, drawing from beneath

his robe, the very arrow with which the Abbot Meginherr had been slain. "Here is a weapon for thee, of which I feel assured, thou canst make a proper use. In my own land—in those provinces over which the Langobards once ruled—the presentation of an arrow from master to slave, was the only ceremony necessary to shew that the slave had been metamorphosed into a free man. It is not so here ; and in compliance with the custom that prevails in this land, I have prepared a charter of enfranchisement for thee. I call," said the Pilgrim, raising his voice so as to be heard in the remotest corner of the church : "upon all here present, to witness this deed of Enfranchisement. I have taken care. Bernhard, that it should be in the proper and legal form."

The Pilgrim stood on the steps of the altar, and read aloud the document he held in his hand, and which was to this effect :—

“ He who frees another from that servitude which is due to himself, may hope to receive the reward of a good action from God, in a future life. Hence it is that, in God’s name, and for my soul’s sake, I do free thee, Bernhard, my serf, now, henceforth and for ever more, from the bond of slavery. I free thee as completely as if thou wert born of free parents, and in order that thou mayest lead the life of a freeman, and owing no service of any description to me or my heirs, but having as thy master God alone, to whom are subjected all men, and all things. At the same time I concede to thee all the property of which thou dost now stand possessed or may hereafter acquire. And if it should so happen, that for the purpose of preserving thy freedom, necessity should compel thee to place thyself under the protection of any monastery—but still guarding thy freedom—thou hast my permission to do so ; and moreover, I do hereby declare, (which God forbid should

ever happen) that any of my heirs, or any enemy of thine should seek to annul, or render void this Charter of Enfranchisement, and reduce thee again to a state of servitude, then I pray that they may be overtaken by the Divine vengeance, and for ever excluded from the Church, and the communion of the faithful ; and also that they be mulcted by the temporal authorities, with a fine of one pound weight in solid gold ; for I declare by this Instrument, that it is my desire that thou shalt be now, and for all time to come, a free man."

The charter was laid on the high altar. The signatures of the Count of the District, of the Prior, the Pilgrim, and some of the monks were attached to it, and Bernhard the Forester was proclaimed to be a free man.

" I am free !" exclaimed Bernhard, " free to fulfil my vow—thank God !" He fell upon his knees, and remained in that at-

titude for a few minutes. He then rose, and addressing the Count of Aschaffenburg, said : “ I have, Sir Count, a vow to fulfil, which it was impossible for me to accomplish, unless I were freed from all bondage and servitude : I am now free as most men are free ; but I desire to be more free. I desire to repudiate my relations—I desire that no one in this world shall be rendered responsible for my actions. I claim a right to do this, Have I your permission to exercise it?”

“ The right thou speakest of,” replied the Count, “ is an ancient custom. It is one so seldom resorted to, that I have never before witnessed it. Thou art by birth, a Frank—thou art now a freeman. I cannot, even if I would, refuse thee what thou dost desire ; for I am commanded by the law to be a party to it.”

Bernhard, who had prepared himself for the performance of this strange ceremony, here appeared before the Count, bearing in

his hand four straight sticks of the alder-tree.

“ Sir Count,” he said, “ I, Bernhard the Forester, now a freeman, do appear before thee, and declare that I renounce father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, with all my kinsfolk, and relations, now and for evermore—I renounce all inheritance from them, by them, or through them ; I renounce, if they be slain, any right to any porton of blood-fine that otherwise might be payable to, or receiveable by me ; and if I be slain, I declare them disinherited from any right to blood-fine for my death—to claim it, to seek for it, or to receive it ; and as I break upon my head, these four alder-sticks, and cast them to four corners away from me, so do I now declare that all connexion, and all affinity between me and my relations is broken off, and cast away for ever.”

As he uttered these words Bernhard broke the sticks of alder, and flung them

away from him. He then turned to the Pilgrim, and said, in a low voice :

“ And now, Sir Pilgrim, whither goest thou ?”

“ To Frankfort,” answered the Pilgrim, “ King Henry is there, and it is near the King I hope yet fear to behold that which I have long and vainly searched for.”

“ And it is near the King, that I hope and trust to see the troopers of Worms,” answered Bernhard.

With these words, the Pilgrim and Bernhard departed from the monastery.

Neither of them ever again appeared in Aschaffenburg.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTIVE ON THE RIVER MAINE.

THE barge in which Beatrice was conveyed from Aschaffenburg was one that appeared to have been constructed for the double purposes of luxury and security ; for between its centre, and its stern, there had been elevated what might be called an apartment rather than a cabin, composed of wood, so solidly constructed, and the matting outside kept in such a constant state of moisture, that the noon-day heat

was not felt by those enclosed within its precincts. On the outside, it was covered with the richest silks, and its floor strewed with soft cushions and ottomans, whilst attached to one of its walls was a table, on which lay, in vessels of gold, the most tempting fruits and viands, with the richest and most cooling wines. To this apartment there were no windows, so that the person enclosed could neither see what was passing outside, nor could any prying eye from without behold what was going on in the cabin. Abundance of light and air were admitted through the roof, which was covered with a species of lattice work, that could be turned, either from within or without, so as to keep the apartment constantly shaded from the rays of the mid-day sun.

At the stern of the boat there was a space left for three persons—a helmsman and two others, and in front of the cabin were the seats for the rowers, and for those

who might be in personal attendance upon the master of the vessel.

This barge was, upon the present occasion, preceded by a large boat, and followed by two others, and all of them filled with soldiers who were armed with short pikes, swords, bows and arrows

It was thus escorted that Beatrice was carried away from Aschaffenburg, and aided by the current and the sturdy strokes of the rowers she was wafted swiftly along the water of the Maine.

Poor Beatrice! she, whose life it might be said had passed away until the last forty-eight hours, in one unbroken course of tranquillity, who had unconsciously risen from infancy to girlhood, and from girlhood to womanhood, and who had no recollection of ever encountering in the face of any one who looked upon her, any other than loving glances, now found herself, well knowing she had never offended a human being; seized upon by the ruffian hands of

utter strangers, arrested as a malefactor, and carried away a captive she knew not whither. Bewildered by the sudden pursuit of her by armed men, when peacefully riding through the forest; horrified at the frightful conflict in which she saw herself involved; addressed to as she had been by the stranger pilgrim, who called upon her, as if he had a rightful claim to recognition by her; and then his brutal murder, as she fancied, by those who were her unprovoked persecutors, followed by her recapture, and last of all the mysterious prison in which she was confined, and the rapidity with which it was moving through the waters; all these circumstances combined together, came rushing upon her brain, and whilst they deprived her of the power of thought, yet left her a prey to the most fearful agony.

Hour passed away after hour, and yet Beatrice remained in the same position, apparently senseless, moveless, voiceless, tearless; with parched lips, aching

head, and trembling hands stretched upon the cushions that strewed the floor of that luxurious cabin, which seemed to be constructed for a Sybarite.

Thus lay she who never before knew what real sorrow had been ; and who, even yet ; was unconscious how much of vice and sin, and wickedness may be found in this world. Had she any idea of these things, or of the fate that was destined for her, perchance, she would have thought more of herself ; but as it was, her greatest horror was occasioned by the thoughts of her mother—of her mother, who, perhaps, even up to that moment was not conscious of what had become of her, (as she had ridden out unaccompanied by Agatha, for the purpose merely of bestowing in charity a piece of gold upon the sick wife of a serf,) of her mother who would wait, perhaps, all day, expecting her return every moment—of her mother, who, when the shades of evening began to fall, would feel convinced, and not till then, that some

calamity had befallen her, and then—she thought how her mother would feel when she was told of all the scenes that had occurred in the hamlet of Aschaffenburg!

Poor Beatrice could think no more, when her imagination presented to her the distress of her mother. And her father—she pitied him, when she reflected what would be his state of mind, when he heard of these events, and thinking of him she was almost disposed to melt into tears; but such thoughts were fugacious, they did not come but by snatches; they were all absorbed in the sympathy of her soul with her mother, as of a portion of her existence—a part of herself, of which she had been despoiled by the rude hands of wicked strangers.

Thus lay poor Beatrice for hours a prey far more to despair than grief when suddenly, and almost unexpectedly there came to her ears, and as if borne to her from a distance over the waters, the tones of a

voice which thrilled to her heart. The words spoken were these :

“ I tell thee, Magnus, there is no use of thy toiling in troubled waters. If there be any fish in the net, the number of the captors are so many as to affright others from following it.”

“ Nay,” replied the voice of him who had been addressed as Magnus, “ I tell thee, Dedi, it must be a very stupid fish if it does not catch at the bait we use. I can assure thee that if there be any fish in the river, I know how to discover it.”

It was the voice of Magnus! of *her* Magnus that Beatrice listened to! The moment she heard his name pronounced, she started to her feet, and when she heard his words she listened, as if each syllable was far more precious to her existence, than the air she breathed ; and when his words had ceased, she replied to them in a voice that was now weak and hoarse, and the accents of which, it seemed to her, could scarcely be heard even by herself—

“ Magnus! Magnus!—help! help!—rescue!—It is I—Beatrice—thy beloved—thy betrothed calls upon thee!—Rescue! dearest Magnus!—Rescue! rescue!”

“ Holloa!” cried out the voice of some one, so close to her ear, that the person seemed to stand at her side. “ Holloa! what means all this. Strike up men one of your Paterini hymns, we must drown by our noise this wench’s squalling.’

The command was instantly obeyed. Beatrice heard the noise made by the singers, but not the blasphemous words that were now chaunted forth by the boatmen.

She listened watchfully in the hope of hearing these joyous notes interrupted by the rough shouts of men engaged in conflict—such as she had heard a few hours before in the hamlet of Aschaffenburg.

She listened in vain: the song of the boatmen suddenly ceased. The silence, with which she appeared before to have been surrounded on all sides was resumed.

She beheld herself again left alone, and helpless in that solitary and splendid chamber, and no sound now reached her ears, but the rippling of the water, and the stroke of the oars, as the barge hurried onward.

Beatrice, however, had heard *again* the voice of Magnus. Its loved tones had come to her, at the very moment when she appeared to have been shut out from the sympathy, and cut off from the aid of every creature on this earth. *The Beatrice*, therefore, who now stood up in that prison-cabin was no longer the same poor, helpless, despairing girl that had lain there for hours lost in wretchedness, and motionless from despair. She was still most miserable, but there was a gleam of hope that such misery would have an end, she knew not how, or by what means; but her whole soul was now filled with a complete confidence in the mercy and the protection of God. The voice of Magnus had forewarned her to prayer,

and to prayer she betook herself; casting herself upon her knees, she gave up her whole thoughts to her devotions—and there, from that sin-blotted apartment, in which vice had so often revelled, and debauchery had begrimed itself with the most hideous deeds, there arose up to Heaven, out of a pure and stainless soul supplications, sweeter than incense, because impregnated with the purest aspirations of heart-felt piety.

And so prayed Beatrice until the barge bore her down the Maine, and was drawn close up to the pathway that led from the bank to the grim fortress of Frankfort.

Meanwhile we must turn to describe those circumstances which her close prison prevented her from observing.

The troopers of Worms in the last charge they had made through the hamlet of Aschaffenburg, and by which they had recaptured Beatrice, were so completely unopposed by the serfs, that they were able to bear away with them the dead bodies

of their three slain companions. These were deposited in the same barge with Beatrice, and confided to the care of the two commanders Lieman and Egen.

“These three men,” observed Lieman to Egen, when they had proceeded many miles down the river, “were like ourselves, and all the sensible men of Worms, avowed Paterini—they hated monks, detested priests, and abominated bishops, as idlers, and debauchees, who robbed the people so thoroughly, as to leave nothing for themselves to lay hold on. I can then safely, and surely interpret their last wishes, when I say they would prefer *not* having what is called ‘Christian burial.’ Honest fellows they were too in their own way—they would much sooner that whatever money may be found on them should be expended by their living loving comrades on good eating and drinking, than cast away upon priests in burial fees, or in buying masses for the repose of their souls, when they did not believe, if

they had souls, that any number of masses could purchase for them peace. What say you then, comrade, shall we strip the dead, fasten weights to them, and fling them into the Maine?"

"I say," replied Egen, "that I can but approve of a proposition by which there is a chance I may be a gainer, and a certainty I cannot be a loser. Here, friends!" he said, to four of the rowers, "lay by your oars for a moment—remove their habiliments from those dead bodies—fasten stones to their necks, and then cast them overboard."

These orders were executed in the course of a few minutes. The bodies were thrown with as little respect into the river, as if they were those of the vilest animals, and not images of the Creator, in which had been enshrined immortal souls.

"Poor fellows!" exclaimed Lieman, "if those moveless things that now lie at the bottom do but feel, the only regret, I

am sure they would have, would be the belief, that what was once a portion of themselves may, in process of time, be converted into a fish, that is eaten by an abbot, and thus they may be made a part, when dead, of that which when living they most abhorred."

"That which is dead thinks as little as it feels," observed Egen.

"And how do you know that what is dead does not feel?" enquired Lieman. "Did you never remark how the body of that which we call a dead eel writhes, as if it endured the most intense agony, when cast into the red-hot embers?"

"Yes—but I remember a learned monk, who was also a greater curer of diseases, declare that such contortions were merely what he called 'muscular action,'" replied Egen.

"I do not know what you mean by muscular action," continued Lieman. "It is at best, methinks, but a phrase, and not an explanation. I see in the twists, and turns,

and distortions of the body of the decapitated eel, the same manifestations exhibited, as if it were alive, and which shew me that it does feel pain—and these manifestations continue until *life is burned out of it*. Then it reposes as moveless as if it were a vegetable that was roasting in the flame. It is then, and then only I am disposed to believe that it is really dead. Now, the eel when living, exhibits its faculties by what you call its muscular action—and the cessation of that action is the proof it is dead. It is not so, with us, Egen. Our muscular action is never developed, but as a result of our *will*—and that receives its impulse through our senses, when those are passive—when, in fact, they are acted upon by circumstances that are external to ourselves. How many things do we *do* in our sleep, when we are to those who look upon us, as if dead. How much *say* we, and *think* we then, when our senses seem to be in a state of suspension? And if it

be so in our sleep, why should we suppose that it would be otherwise when we are deprived by death, but of those faculties which, we know, during our life-time, are but subordinate faculties?"

"Then Lieman, you believe that we have souls—that there is a life after this life?" asked Egen.

"No—I do not say that—I should be sorry to think that," continued Lieman, "because, if I could so think, I would be bound to believe all that the priests tell us of heaven, and hell, and purgatory—and with these the necessity of fasting and praying, and mortifying our passions in this world, in the hope we might be rewarded with everlasting happiness in the next. I do not, and will not believe this, because, to act upon such notions would be to anticipate *here* the hell *there*, of which they speak. As a true Paterini, I believe that if we have passions, it is for the satisfaction of indulging them, and that the error

lies in restraining them or in submitting to any institution, whether it be monkery or marriage, which suppresses them altogether or confines them within narrow limits. I do not believe that there is another world ; but I am much disposed to believe—and, in fact, I cannot prevent myself from believing that, after what is generally called death, *there is life in this world*. I believe that, in that rotting, momentarily corrupting piece of defunct humanity, which we designate *a corpse*, there is still left the power of thought, and even of *feeling*, although the powers of *motion* and *expression* have alike departed from it—and I believe, moreover, that as long as that mass remains together, whether it be in the totality of the flesh, or the completeness of the skeleton, that the *mental, sentient* man is there ; and hence it is, that I do believe the Pagan Romans acted like sensible philosophers, when they directed their bodies should be burned instead of consigning them to ages of misery

and abhorrence, in filthy graves, until time and decay had, at last, scattered and dissolved all the elements of thought, which had been combined together in their living frames."

These words so lightly spoken by Lie-man, were heard by Count Werenher, who sat at the back of the boat, holding the helm, and not condescending to join in the conversation. He was destined, at no remote period, to ponder more seriously upon their import.

"Yours is a strange faith," remarked Egen; "and I must candidly own, far more dreary—far more hopeless—far more disgusting—and far more abhorrent to ones feelings, than that of the Christians. There is brilliancy—there is glory—there is consolation for the living and the dead in their promises; but in your assurances what is there, if we were to put trust in them? Augh! we must regard this earth and its soil converted into a hell-graveyard crowded with grieving, festering, ani-

mated corpses. But believe as you list—I will believe nothing, or I will believe all. For the present I am content to believe nothing ; for I would not be fit for the duties I have undertaken to discharge, if I did believe any thing. According to your notions, the men whose bodies we cast into this river, were conscious of what we were saying and doing.”

“ I believe they were,” said Lieman, “ I believe they *thought* unpronounceable curses upon you, when they heard and saw you joking and laughing as to their deaths, instead of grieving for them. I believe too it will be more amusing to them to lie and rot away in the bottom of a clear fresh stream like this, instead of being crammed into a fat, dull church-yard, with no other companions than the worms that would batten upon them. I believe, however, that the dead gain no new faculties, and hence that they are unconscious of what we are now saying, and doing—and being so, we had better examine their garments,

and see if they have left to us, their executors, any money or valuables."

They discovered in the dresses of the soldiers a few crowns, and with these, in the purse of one of them, a small thin case of steel, about a finger in length, and by its side, a diminutive round box, and with it a small diamond. In the same leathern purse, containing these things, there was not a single piece of coin.

"To whom think you did this purse belong?" asked Lieman.

"I am sure it was to Anselm of Worms," answered Egen, "I know this diamond, as it is not a week since he showed it to me, and told me, that he had then received it from the King, for a valuable service performed by him.

"To Anselm of Worms!" said Lieman. "The plough-share that dashed out his brains had so disfigured his features I did not recognise his body. Then be assured, Egen, if these things belonged to Anselm of Worms, they are more precious than

gold ; for Anselm had travelled in the East, and acquired the knowledge of rare secrets. I often heard him boast that he possessed a dagger so small that he could conceal it between two of his fingers, and yet the slightest puncture from which was inevitable death in five minutes afterwards, and also, that he had a poison imperceptible to the taste, and yet so potent, that it was impossible to preserve it, in any less solid material than crystal. What if these should be the treasures of which Anselm was so proud, we may indeed regard ourselves this day as fortunate men. King Henry would give a hundred golden crowns for each of them."

As Lieman spoke thus, he opened the thin case of steel, within which he found another of pure gold, and within that lay a small dagger, so minute in all its proportions, that it seemed to be formed as a mere ornament to append to a necklace, or attach to a lady's girdle. In appearance it was fashioned of polished steel, and

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there was nought to denote the deadly qualities ascribed to it. The little round box was next opened. It contained, seemingly, nothing more than a circular piece of crystal, about the size of a cherry stone, in the centre of which was discernible a globule of what looked to be the purest water.

“These are indeed,” exclaimed Lieman, “the two precious poisons of which Anselm was so proud.”

The Count Werenher had until this moment remained a silent listener to the conversation of these two men, of whose valor as soldiers, and whose devotion as courtiers to the King he was well aware, in his double capacity of Henry’s minister and prime favourite. Proud of his rank, and haughty to all his inferiors, he had, so far from joining in their conversation, not even appeared to hear it. His curiosity and his cupidity now overmastered his reserve.

“Come hither Lieman and Egen,” he

said, "I desire to speak a word with you. I thought I heard you but now speaking of some curious dagger, and some strange poison discovered in the purse of Anselm. They are indeed pretty toys," he said, taking them in his hand, and looking at them with the same admiration that a master-manufacturer now-a-days would regard an invention in machinery, by which he might save himself the daily expense of a thousand operatives. "They are," he continued, "very pretty toys—such toys as a King's minister ought always to have in his closet. Give them to me, Lieman and Egen, and on my return to Frankfort, you shall have three hundred crowns to divide between you."

"They are yours, Count Werenher, without purchase."

"I wish your lordship would accept them as a gift from your servants."

Such was the language in which these two courtiers addressed the King's favourite.

“No—no—I thank you both,” answered Werenher, “I am as grateful to both as if I had accepted those things as a gift. I heard you speak of two hundred crowns as their value, and I therefore purposely placed a higher price upon them, as a proof of my regard for both. My wealth is great, and it is no dishonour to you that you do not superabound in it. Accept then that which is useful to you, by permitting me to retain that which I consider far more precious than the few golden crowns I have given in exchange.”

So intently engaged were Count Werenher, Lieman and Egen in this conversation—so much excited was the cupidity of the Count, and the avarice of his associates in crime, that they did not remark that a bend in the river had brought them within view of a large hawking party on its banks, and that they had been for some time the subject of speculation and of comment. That which they could not hear, we may be permitted to state to the reader.

The leading personages in the party, who were engaged in the sport of hawking, and that the pursuit of game had brought to the banks of the river, were the youthful Magnus; his cousin, and his friend Dedithe younger; the father of the latter, Count Dedi of Saxony; and his wife, the Countess Adela.

The Countess was the first to perceive the barge, and the boats of armed men that followed it.

“Ho! husband,” she cried, “come hither. What means this strange craft in the Maine? I never saw barge built like that before.”

The Count Dedi looked, and then turning to his wife, said—

“Alas! Adela, the sight of that barge is proof, if proof we wanted, that the King, Henry, remains unchanged, and, I fear, unchangeable in his despotic disposition and the indulgence in his vices. That barge contains a prisoner—you see that it is preceded

and followed by armed men --but whether the victim confined in it be man or woman, I cannot tell."

"Then I can," observed Magnus. "If the prisoner in the barge were a man, there would be several soldiers on board ; but with the rowers, there are only three individuals, there must be either no prisoner at all, or that prisoner is a woman."

"Shrewdly guessed, boy," said the Countess Adela ; "but I may tell thee there is a prisoner on board ; for if there were not, the boats would not proceed in that regular manner, prepared for an attack either before or behind. Besides, thou mayest perceive that in the boat that precedes the barge, as well as in those that follow it, the soldiers are fully armed, and prepared for any attack that may be made upon them. And good God ! it is a woman !—One of our daughters, or of our sisters, or nieces, who may be thus

treated. Oh ! if I were but a warrior, I would not sit tamely down under the perpetration of such brutalities.”

“ Patience, good Adela,” said the elder Dedi.

“ Patience ! forsooth, with such a spectacle of abomination as this placed before the eyes of an honest woman—of a mother too—Patience ! Shame upon the lips that can say patience, when the hand of every man—of every one deserving the name of man, should be raised to prevent such a crime—a crime like that which we now look upon.”

“ Patience ! I repeat the phrase ;” replied the Count Dedi, “ for it is alone applicable to the circumstances in which we are placed, even if our worst suspicions were confirmed. If we knew, that in that barge there was not a man arrested on the charge of some crime, and who, though so accused, was safe until condemned by his peers : if I say, we were quite sure that in that barge there was confined not a man,

but a young, innocent, virtuous female, who had been dragged away from her family and friends to be the victim of the vile passions of a vile King, still I would say—patience!—because we could do nought but rail. Excuse me, Adela, for saying it—rail like a woman—at a wrong that we had not the strength to prevent. With what other weapon can we arm ourselves at this moment, but patience—I cannot transform my swift-flying hawks into swift-sailing boats—I cannot change my dogs into oarsmen, nor my fowlers into warriors. What then can I do ! even if I knew the iniquity to be worse than I suppose ; be patient—bide my time, and if I cannot render the crime abortive at least watch my opportunity, and anticipate the vengeance of Heaven, by punishing the wrong-doer. Yes, Adela, I repeat it—patience—supposing this to be the last of the abominations of Henry :—especially as we do not at this moment know whether there be

any truth at all in our suspicions ; and whether in point of fact there is even a single prisoner—woman or man within the barge.”

“ That is a fact,” said Magnus, “ of which I shall take care we shall not long remain in ignorance. Mark, Count,” he said, “ that point about half a mile distant from this. You see that the Maine there runs between such closely joining banks. that any persons on board can hear the voice of a speaker across the water—your son and I will repair thither, and you may rest assured, that if there be a prisoner on board, he or she shall hear our words—and if not gagged, nor a willing prisoner—we must hear them in return.”

“ Thou art a good youth, Magnus,” said the Countess Adela, “ and I have no doubt thou wilt yet prove thyself not only a stout soldier, but a skilful general.”

“ Yes,” said Count Dedi, “ too good, too noble, and too exalted, and his life far too

precious to be risked in a mad enterprise, or lost in a vain exploit. Magnus, I will consent to thy making the trial on one condition."

"Name it," said Magnus, as he prepared to give a loose rein to his steed.

"It is to require of thee," replied the elder Dedi, "supposing the voice that answers thee—that is if any should respond to thy call—should be that of some one known to thee—thou wilt, instead of madly plunging into the river, to be drowned, or shot to death with arrows, return to me, as the good and brave soldier returns to his commander when he has discovered the enemy, instead of stopping to fight with him. Wilt thou so obey me?"

"I will," answered Magnus, "Though it were the voice of my own mother I heard, I will return to thee. I see perfectly well that we are helpless—that we, on land and unarmed, can do nought against armed men in boats, and hence, I consider that I am bound to return to thee, and report

what I may hear, in order that thou mayest divine the means for baffling the enemy."

"I repeat my wife's words—thou art a good youth, Magnus," said the elder Dedi. "My son knows something of the devices of war, and will tell thee how thou mayst so speak, as to escape exciting the instant suspicion and attention of the enemy—for it is an enemy—the enemy of virtue, of religion, of morality; of knightly truth, manly rectitude, and female honour. Remember that, and also, that you can endanger all these by rashness. And now both have my permission to go. Go—I say—and a father's blessing go with you."

"And a woman's prayers," added the Countess Adela.

Half an hour had not passed away until Magnus and his cousin were by the side of the Countess Adela and her husband.

Half an hour had but elapsed, since Magnus, buoyant, joyous, high-spirited. animated, with the young blood of fervent manhood flushing his cheek, and its ardent spirit flashing forth in brilliant glances from his eyes, darted away from the Count and Adela ; and yet at the close of that brief period of time, the same Magnus returned to them—but so sadly changed, that he looked to be but the dead resemblance of that brave youth, whom Adela loved, as if he were her own son. He advanced towards her and her husband, with cheeks that were now ashy pale—dimmed eyes, and trembling limbs, and, passing the Countess, without perceiving her, he was merely able to pronounce these words :

“I have, Count, fulfilled my promise—I have done no rash deed ; and yet—oh ! God ! I have been called upon to the rescue—and that too—in words that were worse for me to hear, than the voice of my own mother.”

And so saying, the man, who had so lately been a boy, burst into tears.

“Magnus ! my dear Magnus !” cried the Countess Adela. “What can this mean ?”

“It means—” said Magnus ; but he could speak no more. His utterance was again lost in an uncontrollable burst of grief.

“It means this,” said young Dedi, “that we called out, so as to be heard by the captive confined in the barge—that the captive not only answered us, but that she called upon Magnus. What more, she might have said, neither of us know ; for the boatmen, while she was speaking, began singing in so loud a tone as to render her words inaudible. This, mother, however, I do believe, that the female captive is the betrothed of Magnus. No wonder, poor youth, that he is in the sad state of grief which now overpowers him.”

“No wonder, in sooth !,” said Adela, who although in her sixtieth year,

retained all the vivacity of her youth, “and now, my Lord—Count of the Empire, and Commander as you are over thousands of brave Saxon swordsmen—what say *you*? Here is something worse than anything you dared to suppose. Here is the daughter of a nobleman seized upon—for she who has been selected by Magnus as his destined bride, must be of noble birth. It is not enough that the wives and daughters of our serfs are the victims to a wretch; for I will never again call him King: it is not enough for him to fill with dishonour the homes of free citizens; but now, the families of nobles, of those, by whose swords he holds his crown, are to be scandalised by his excesses. What say you now—wise, cautious, and prudent general, to such a deed as this?”

“Patience!” replied the phlegmatic Dedi.

“What! patience again! Oh! for the sword of a man, instead of the tongue of a woman,” exclaimed Adela, “in order

that I might for ever purify the earth of a monster—made still more monstrous, because permitted by a degenerate race of Germans to wear a crown.”

“My good, true-hearted Adela,” said Dedi, “if you were a man, and wished to use your sword against a cunning and cowardly adversary, you would not, before you drew it, afford to him, by your clamour, the opportunity of having you disarmed. You would be patient. Your courage, and your resolution would be best exhibited by your patience. And so it should be now. A great outrage has been committed ; and, by that outrage, a great wrong has been done to us, through our relative Magnus. We have then first to see, if we cannot by any exertion, or any device, on our part, prevent the crime which has been commenced, from being fully perpetrated. This is our first duty—it involves some thought, much uncertainty, and great risk. Nothing must be left undone to snatch from the

gripe of the king the destined bride of Magnus. Should those efforts prove vain, then the unprovoked wrong shall be followed by a vengeance great, and flagrant as the wrong itself. To secure, however, the one or the other—we must be patient—for patience is prudence, when the weak are compelled to enter into a death struggle with the strong. And now, let me say to you, Adela, that Henry is forcing on such a struggle with Saxony—and that the time, even now cannot be far distant, when King Henry, his prelates, his knights, and his hired soldiers will be in one camp; and in the other, the men of Saxony, from the highest noble to the poorest ploughman. Even our sufferings, or the wrongs done to us, as individuals must not be permitted to bring on a premature conflict, in which, those we have loved best and cared for most—the brave agriculturalists of Saxony should be sacrificed as victims.”

“You speak of civil war, father,” ob-

served the younger Dedi ; “but what meanwhile is to be done to save her, who is now borne away to Frankfort, where King Henry is expected this very day. If there be no other way of preserving her, I will force my way to the king’s presence, and stab him to the heart.”

“The dagger of an assassin should never be grasped by the hand of a soldier,” replied Count Dedi. “Thou must kill no man, however bad he may be, on suspicion that he intends to do another bad deed. We may be the victims of assassination, my son, and it is probable, with such a king as Henry, we shall be ; but to save my own life—nay, to save the life of thy mother, I would not permit Henry to be slain, but in the fair, and open field of battle. I would not even take from him the crown he dishonours, until he had been adjudged by the Diet, and declared by the Pope, unworthy to wear it. To thee, as to thy mother, I say patience. What sayest thou, Magnus ?”

“That thou didst command me to obey thee as the soldier obeys his general, and I have done so,” replied Magnus, “that I have, in obedience to thy commands, permitted her, who is dearer to me than my own life—the very essence of my existence—to pass before my eyes a prisoner, and yet made no effort at rescuing her ; for, such were thy orders. And now, I ask thee, what further directions hast thou to give me ? By what means—even if they include the sacrifice of my life, can I preserve her pure, and untarnished, as when I first saw her, and last spoke the words of love to her.”

“By inspiring her with the hope that, despite the dangers and difficulties that surround her, she may yet be thy wife,” answered Count Dedi. “By giving her confidence in herself and reliance upon thee ; by conveying to her the knowledge that, though separated from her by the thick walls of a fortress—thine eye is

upon the gate by which she has entered, and that it will be ever watchful when it may again be opened for her to pass beyond the boundaries of her prison. This, thou canst do ; the rest, leave to God ; more cannot be done by man at present. But we must return to Frankfort with all speed. It is necessary we should anticipate the arrival of the barge. As we proceed, I shall shew thee how our dear Adela can serve thee, and annoy the King, whom she detests. Sure I am, that in such a task she will not fail, for lack of zeal."

Thus speaking, the hawking party of Count Dedi were observed travelling at a rapid pace towards Frankfort.

They were so observed by the soldiers, in the last of the boats that followed as an escort upon the barge in which Beatrice was a prisoner.

Men, practised in the ways of vice are ever suspicious. The same base impulse that makes them practise evil themselves,

induces them to believe that all other men are animated with a spirit like their own in wickedness, in impurity, in dishonesty, in avarice, or in sordid selfishness. Such are all bad men at all times ; but if there be any particular moment, in which, more than another, they are suspicious and watchful, it is when they are engaged in doing some action, the utter baseness of which they conceal from their own hearts.

Such was the case with Count Werenher and his two associates, Egen and Lie-man, in the execution of their foul abduction of Beatrice. Although the words spoken by Magnus, and Dedi the younger, were not heard by them, still the manner in which they had been responded to by Beatrice, excited their suspicions, and the consequence was, the order given to the soldiers in the rearmost boat to fall behind and watch the hawking party collected on the banks.

No sooner had these soldiers reported the appearance of the young Dedi and Magnus as coming from that point of the river where the voices had been heard ; of their joining the Count, and his wife Adela ; and the whole party starting at full speed, in the direction of Frankfort, than Count Werenher gave orders that the men should be prepared for an instant attack upon them ; and sending the first boat considerably in advance with directions to give alarm on the slightest appearance of danger. The small fleet proceeded at a slower speed down the river, than had previously marked its progress.

No event occurred during the remainder of the voyage to justify the precautions that had been adopted by Count Werenher. Nought was to be seen in field or in forest, as the boats sailed onward — but their usual occupants — the birds, the beasts, and the hardworking

serfs—the last so occupied, that they seldom raised their eyes to gaze upon the passing barge, and its attendant boats.

Meanwhile Count Werenher sat again alone and musing.

“Dedi the younger,” thought he. “It is the first time *he* has crossed my path, and yet I cannot tell, why it is, that now and for the first time, his name shakes my heart, with the same dread, that I suppose the condemned criminal feels, when he looks for the first time on the headsman assigned to slay him. I do not hate the man—I *fear him*; and wherefore? There is nought in common between us. I do not intend to injure him; I can have no interest in doing so. I am his superior in rank, in wealth, in power. He never can be my rival, for neither he, nor one of his family will accept, much less seek a favour from Henry. Why then do I—for *I do*—fear him? Wherefore have an apprehension about

him? the more annoying, because it is indefinable and inexplicable, and yet have not the slightest feeling of the same description towards Duke Magnus? my superior in all things but in the love that Henry bears me—and upon whom I am at this very moment inflicting an unprovoked and irreparable wrong. It is strange, most strange, that I should dread my inferior, and have no fear as respects my superior; dread the man I despise, and disregard the man I ought most to dread. This is an inexplicable superstition—but I cannot shake it off. It is a sensation, I feel, that clings to me, as the shroud clings to the decaying corpse.

“But what means this?” said Werenher, starting up, as he saw the high towers and frowning battlements of Frankfort before him. “Wherefore are there such crowds of Saxon serfs drawn up around our landing place. A rescue may be contemplated. Lieman, do you take charge of the soldiers.

Before the female is disembarked, form a double line of them, from the barge to the postern. Egen, to you is confided the charge of conveying our captive from the barge in safety. I shall remain behind, disguised as I hitherto have been : as it is the King's especial command I should not openly appear in this affair."

The orders given by Werenher were up to a certain point strictly executed. The vast crowd collected on the bank, willingly fell back to enable the soldiers to form a clear path for the captive.

Lieman walked along the vacant space, and saw that the soldiers formed two compact lines. He then called out :

" Comrade, bring forth the King's prisoner."

The crowd—curious it might be—but apparently nothing more, saw carried out of the boat a female whose form and face were so completely concealed by her habit

and hood, that it was impossible for any one to guess what might be her age, or appearance. She was borne thus, rather than led, by Egen through the files of soldiers, until she had got about half-way, when one of those forward movements took place in the crowd, which seemingly involuntarily, never occurs without being felt to be irresistible, by those who attempt a momentary opposition to it. Without a word or a cry, or the manifestation of the slightest excitement, the well-formed line of the soldiers, that seemed so compact a moment before, was broken ! snapped as noiselessly and as surely, as if it had been formed of friable thread—and in an instant, that which was before a vacant space, was trodden upon by human beings : the inbursting tide of the population had as completely concealed that vacant place from observation, as the advancing sea wave, in its flow onwards, covers that portion of the shore, which the ebbing waters had previously left exposed.

In this sudden push of the crowd and break-up of the line, the only one that was injured was Egen, who was not knocked, but, as it seemed to himself, dragged, by some hand from beneath, down to the earth, and there trodden upon. He was thus, for an instant, separated from Beatrice. His loud cry for help excited alarm ; and it was instantly followed by a command from Lieman to the soldiers—“to use their swords, and cut down the serfs, if they did not make way for the prisoner.” Almost at the same moment, he snatched her from the hands of an old Saxon female serf, who seemed to be whispering in her ear, and then gathering the soldiers around him, he was astonished at finding, the mob dispersing with such rapidity, that in a moment they were all beyond his reach. He, therefore, experienced no difficulty in conveying his captive to her destined prison — the

fortress — and there placing her in safety.

He congratulated himself upon his success ; and so did those who were opposed to him, for they had accomplished all they intended to effect.

During the few brief moments, that Egen had been separated from Beatrice by the crowd, and before Lieman could recover possession of her, the Countess Adela, in the disguise of an ancient Saxon female serf, had spoken these words in the ear of the captive :—

“ Magnus watches over thee. Be careful not to touch any food but what is given to thee by a Saxon female. Place confidence in any one who mentions to thee the name of ‘ Adela.’ Such come from me—the Countess Dedi. God protect thee !”

Whilst these words were spoken—there were two others in that dense crowd that conversed, for the first time, together.

As the Count Werenher, disguised beneath an ample cloak, and his face covered from public view by its large deep hood, was advancing up the open pathway between the two lines of soldiers, he was utterly bewildered at finding the line so noiselessly broken, and before he could recover from his surprise, he was indignant at perceiving the strong hand of a stout young Saxon serf, tear off his hood with such violence, as to rend it from the garment to which it had been previously attached. The proud Count thus saw that he was left bareheaded in the midst of a mob of gaping, laughing Saxon serfs. He turned upon his assailant, and his anger so far overmastered his prudence, that he at once exclaimed—

“Ha ! I know thee, sir. Thou wearest a gear that well befits thee. Dedi, the younger, descends to his proper position when he assumes the garb of a Saxon serf.”

“Be it so,” said Dedi. “I had rather

live and die a Saxon serf, than be the gilded, titled, disguised, and skulking, Frankish pander of a King. Thou knowest me, thou sayest. Well—I know thee too—Count Werenher—and bear this knowledge with thee also—that I despise thee—loathe thee—spit upon thee—as a disgrace to manhood ; as a dishonour to knighthood ; as a blot upon the nobility of the Empire. And, thing that thou art, I will not strike thee with a sword, for a knight’s sword should never be sheathed in carrion—I will not strike thee with my hand ; for the hand of an honest man should never touch a villain even in anger ; but I strike thee, with what most befits thee—that which is foul, because it has come in contact with thee—the disguise thou didst use to conceal thee in thy dishonor. There,” said he, dashing the hood in the face of the Count—“ take that, and hang it upon thy shield, and write beneath it, as a motto—‘ *eternal infamy* ’ ”

With these words, the tall, athletic Dedi stood looking down upon his antagonist, who seemed to shrink back in terror from him. For a moment—and it was but a moment that the gallant youth thus looked—a feeling, akin to pity, touched him when he perceived that fear had really taken possession of Count Werenher. Convinced of this, he did not fix his eyes a second time upon the face of the Count, but walked from the spot, commiserating the weakness of a wretch, he could not avoid loathing.

Count Werenher stood as if transfixed to the earth ; his cheek still tingling from the blow he had received, and his hand convulsively grasping the hood.

“This then,” said he, “is the cause—the unknown cause that made me, I knew not why, tremble at the name of Dedi the younger. *I am dishonoured—for ever, too . . .* It is true—and though I dip this hood in his heart’s-blood—and *I will do so—*

still the words and the blow must remain !
Eternal infamy ! . . . Woe to this day,
that thus brought us in conflict ! Woe to
thee, young man ! and woe—ay, thou-
sand woes and curses on myself !

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY IV., KING OF GERMANY.

THERE sat in an apartment, lofty, magnificently furnished, yet gloomy, for it was lighted but by two long, narrow slits in a thick wall, three men, as different in their appearance, as they were in years, from each other. The first was a meagre, frail-looking old man, with white hairs, with thin nose, peaked chin, and, in his small grey eyes, that anxious, wavering look, which denoted that he was eager for the

acquisition of wealth, and of a timid disposition. This old man wore the magnificent vestments of a Prince-Archbishop. He sat before a table on which there were rich wines, and a profusion of dried fruits ; but his goblet filled to the brim, and the fruits that lay heaped before him showed that he had not yet partaken of any portion of the feast, to which he had been invited as a guest. At the table, and sitting opposite to him, was a man about five and forty years of age, low-sized, thick-set, with huge, broad shoulders, and a hand so large that the capacious goblet he held seemed to be hidden within the cavity of the palm, rather than grasped by him. The low forehead, and the short, flat nose, as well as the gaping mouth, were scarcely discernible amid the mass of fiery red hair that covered his face, and gave him the semblance more of a wild beast than of a human being. He sat and fed, or rather munched, like a hog, and swallowed

fast, one after the other, large goblets of the odorous old Rhenish wine.

Between these two men sat, and with his back turned to the window so that the beams of the red setting-sun seemed to bestow upon his features, whenever he turned to his guests, a roseate hue, a young man—richly endowed with all the graces of youth. His hair, which was of the colour of the finest yellow flax, and of the polished smoothness of satin, fell in long ringlets upon his shoulders. His forehead was fair, broad and majestic ; his eyes a violet blue, seemed to beam with softness and the most tender affection—his nose straight—his chin round—his cheeks still bearing that peachy delicacy that comes with boyhood, and that always disappears in the first few years of manhood—his mouth shaded by a slight moustache, and decorated by pearly teeth, might from its rich and coral lips be mistaken for that of a woman, but that sometimes when it

was intended to express a smile, it was seen, and as if in despite of himself, to curl into a sneer—the malice of which was unmistakeable. To this face was to be added all the advantages of a commanding person—so tall, and yet so graceful, as to render that young man, even in the midst of the tall men of Germany, one remarkable for his height and dignity.

This noble, this handsome, this truly royal-looking young man was Henry IV., King of Germany, the son of the Emperor Henry III., and of the Empress Agnes, the daughter of William, Duke of Aquitaine. The old man who sat at his right hand, was Sigefrid, Archbishop of Mayence; and the middle-aged man on his left, Count Diedrich of Treves.

Those three individuals assembled, as they appeared to be for a luxurious banquet, sat silent for a few moments. Diedrich seemed to have no thought but for eating or drinking, and, the very silence, that now prevailed, appeared to be an ad-

ditional ingredient to his animal enjoyments. The Archbishop, although mute, sat uneasily in his chair, and twisted and shifted about like one who has paid a visit, he would, if he could, have avoided, and was wishing for some excuse, by which he might bring it to a speedy termination ; whilst Henry sat watching the bearing of his guests, and amused by the contrast it presented.

A pause had taken place in the conversation, as frequently happens when men are engaged in matters of serious import, and something has been said calculated to excite reflection in the hearers.

The first to resume the conversation was Henry, who turning to the Archbishop of Mayence, said :

“ And so the busy meddling Anno has been again interfering in my affairs. He has, you say, written to Rome.”

“ Yes,” replied the Prelate. “ I have a friend in the monastery of St. Pantaleon, who assures me that he has seen the letters

addressed by Anno, Archbishop of Cologne, to the Archdeacon Hildebrand."

"I know Hildebrand," said Henry. "He makes and unmakes Popes. I think I must some day or another imitate his example, and fashion one of my own Bishops or Archbishops into a Pope. What say you, most reverend Sigefrid? You would be a very good, pious, humble Pope yourself?"

"Your Majesty is pleased to jest with me," replied Sigefrid. "I am willing to do much—perchance, much more than I ought to please you; but to oppose myself to the Church and to the Pope, to whom I have bound myself in obedience, I must, once for all, declare, if your Majesty should not mean what you have said in jest—I cannot do."

"I did but jest, most pious Sigefrid," said Henry. "I promise you, that *you* at least shall never be asked by me to be a German Pope."

These words were accompanied by a

sneer, which though it might have escaped the attention of Sigefrid, was noted by Diedrich.

As Henry spoke these words sneeringly—a new thought seemed for the first time to rise up in his mind; for he became suddenly silent, and remained, for some time lost apparently in his own reflections. At last he looked up, smiling blandly upon Sigefrid, and thus continuing the conversation with him.

“But your friend, you say, saw the letters addressed by Anno to Hildebrand, and read them?”

“He did every word of them,” replied the Archbishop, losing all his usual caution in the cheering smile of his Sovereign.

“Then tell me the purport of them; for I am perfectly conscious that your friend did not keep their contents a secret from you,” exclaimed Henry, laughing at the surprise and embarrassment he saw portrayed in the features of the timid Archbishop.

“Your Majesty!” stuttered forth Sige-

frid. "Your Majesty assuredly will not ask of me to betray the secrets of another person."

"Nor do I," replied Henry. "I only ask as a favour, what I am sure you will not refuse to tell me, namely that which is *the secret*. You know, and you can tell me what Anno wrote to Hildebrand. You are possessed of the secret--it may be useful to me to know it."

"It may be far more for your Majesty's peace of mind not to know it," was the whispered observation of Sigefrid.

"What!" cried Henry, starting up, and grasping the golden-handled dagger in his girdle, whilst a dark frown gathered on his brow, and gave to his face of manly beauty the same malignant scowl, which a painter might assign to the pictured likeness of a fallen angel. "What! is there a traitorous correspondence carried on with Rome, and I am to be told, that I am not to know it, because a timid priest is paltering with his own conscience. Sigefrid, Prince Arch-

bishop of Mayence—I tell you I *must* know what Anno wrote to Hildebrand. Tell it now—and I may thank you—refuse to tell it, and I swear to you, that you shall never leave this room a living man.”

The Count Diedrich said nothing, but he drew his broad dagger from his girdle—and with a slight movement, that seemed to cost him not the exertion of a single muscle, drove its point an inch into the table ; and then the trembling handle oscillated above the flashing steel, as if it feared the hand that had touched it.

Diedrich, having performed this feat, went on munching his food, and gorging himself with wine, as if he were the chance witness of a scene, in which he took not the slightest interest.

The old prelate gasped with agony, as he witnessed the pantomimic action of the bristly savage that sat opposite to him.

“Sire,” he said, “I swear to you, by all that I hold most sacred, that you mistake, grievously mistake, in supposing,

that Anno has written any treason of you to Rome. When I said, it was better for you not to know what he had written, I merely meant : that Anno, having been the friend of your father, and the tutor of your youth, has written of you in terms I do not like to repeat, because the repetition of his phrases would be more painful for me to utter, then even for you to hear."

"Does Anno prefer any complaint to Rome against me as a monarch? That," said Henry, "is a plain question. Give it a plain and direct answer."

"No," replied Sigefrid. "Anno writes, as a friend to a friend, deploring the vices—your Majesty will excuse the word—of one, for whom he feels the tenderness of a father, and begging that Heaven may be besieged with prayers on your behalf."

"The hypocrite!—the old, ill-natured hypocrite—how I hate him—aye, from my very childhood I hated him," said Henry, throwing into these expressions all

the vindictive energy of his character. "But come, my good Sigefrid," he continued, in a soothing tone of voice to the trembling old man, "you are always too charitable in your construction of the motives and actions of your fellow man—especially if that fellow man be a priest, and above all—an *Archbishop*!—(And then, that which was intended for a smile upon the lip of the monarch, became wrinkled into a sneer.)—"You say that what Anno has written respecting me is not treason. I must be a better judge than you of such a fact. I may detect the poison of a malicious intention in those words, which appear to you to breathe nought but the sentiments of the purest charity. Come then, tell me, as well as your memory will serve you—and I know that it is retentive; for I can boast in my Court no man so learned as Sigefrid—tell me, I repeat, word for word what Anno has written of me."

“But, my liege,” said Sigefrid, who heard with horror this proposition, “his words are harsh and severe, and—”

“And they are so, because you yourself think them to be true,” interrupted Henry. “I shall, however, cast no blame on the narrator, because he has told me an unpleasant tale, which I insisted upon hearing. If you had here the letters of Anno, and presented them to me for perusal. I should thank you for showing them to me, no matter how unpleasing might be their import. And so it is now, in listening to you, whilst narrating their contents, I shall fancy not that I hear the voice of Sigefrid, but that I hear recited the words of Anno.”

“But, your Majesty, I do not know how to pronounce these words—” said Sigefrid.

Henry impatiently stamped his foot ; and in the instant Diedrich wrenched his dagger from the table, and placing it by the side of his goblet, looked at the Archbishop, and in a voice loud as the roar of

a lion, gave utterance to the single word—
“*Talk!*”

The Archbishop started as if he had received an electric shock. Henry smiled to see the effect which the fear of his brute guest had produced upon the Prelate, and then in a voice, soft and sweet as that of a love-sick maiden, he said—

“Honest Diedrich, do not interrupt the pious Archbishop ; when he speaks he does not like to hear the voice of another. And now, good Sigefrid, as you were saying Anno of Cologne thus wrote to Hildebrand of Rome, greeting and begging the benefit of his pious prayers,” and then proceeded thus—“You see I have given you the commencement of his letter. Let us now hear the remainder. No further preface, I pray you. I repeat, I feel, that I am listening to his words, and not to yours. Go on, I say ; for his very words I tell you, I *will* have.”

“*Talk,*” grunted Diedrich, as if he were

addressing himself to his broad-bladed dagger, and not to the dismayed Prelate.

Sigefrid felt that he could not with safety any longer refuse ; that his very life now depended on his candour, and whilst his words purported to be spoken alone to Henry, his eyes remained, as if fascinated, by the slightest movement of the fierce man who sat opposite to him.

“Then,” said the Archbishop, “since your Majesty insists upon it, I must tell you that Anno in writing to Hildebrand, deplores that notwithstanding all the pains he had taken in your education, he yet greatly fears, nothing but a miracle from Heaven can save you from perdition—that you, the son of a saintly father, and of a virtuous mother, have abandoned yourself to the grossest debaucheries and the most flagrant vices—that being married to a most kind, amiable, and tender wife, you have exchanged her society for that of the vilest of her sex ; that if a young

maiden, or wife amongst your subjects, is praised for her beauty, you have her seized upon by your myrmidons, and dragged by violence from her home ; that you have thus dishonored many families, and that you have added to that dishonor, by compelling those females, who have been your victims, to take in marriage some of the meanest of your slaves ; that even the men who are confederates in your crimes are not safe from the outburst of your capricious temper, and remorseless disposition ; that you are so perfidious that you can smile upon those you hate, and embrace as if he were a brother, the very man for whose life you have laid a snare, and whose death, contrived by yourself, you know to be inevitable ; that instead of associating with the Lords and Prelates of Germany, your chosen companions are base-born voluptuaries, ruffian stabbers, and ——, but,” continued the Archbishop of Mayence, starting up in terror, and

casting himself on the earth before Henry.
“Save, oh! save me, from the dagger of that dreadful man.”

“Sheathe your dagger, honest Diedrich, it is not wanted here,” said Henry, feeling a malignant pleasure in witnessing the fright of the old man who clung to his knees. “Arouse yourself, Sigefrid. When Count Dredrich clutched his dagger, as if about to disembowel an enemy, he had no thought of injuring even a single hair of so venerable, so good, so pious and so clever an Archbishop as you. He knows—for he is very shrewd, even though no orator, as you are, that you did but faithfully repeat the unkind expressions of another, and not your own sentiments. He knows, for I have told him so, that you are one of my surest, best and tenderest friends—that you love your King, almost as much as he does ; and therefore, though he does not say it, nor even look it, he has a most tender regard for you. There, rouse yourself, Sige-

frid, and take your place again at the board. There now—see how Diedrick smiles on you. *It* is a smile, I can tell you, though it looks so like a frown. And now listen to him. Diedrich, do you not love this Archbishop ?”

“*Much*,” growled Diedrich, as he crunched some dates.

“There now, Sigefrid, be content, for there is in that little ‘much’ of Count Diedrich far more of genuine charity, brotherly love, tender affection, and softness of disposition than could be discovered in an hours’ sermon from the lips of Anno Archbishop of Cologne. Oh, it is a ‘much’ that means far more than you, Sigefrid, with all your book-learning, can divine : it means, among other things, this—that I, Diedrich, Count of the brave city of Treves, and my trusty friend, Henry of Germany, are obliged, but not flattered by your faithful narrative of the unkind words spoken of us by that arch hypocrite, Anno of Cologne ; for—” and

Henry's sneering, gibing tones, hitherto used in speaking to the Archbishop of Mayence, here suddenly changed to those of a man whose violence of passion rendered his voice husky, "For," he continued, "Anno is, I swear to you, an arch-hypocrite, a morose, abominable, envious hypocrite, who hates others the enjoyment of those pleasures, which he has denied himself, because to gratify his insatiable lust for power, he considers it necessary that the vulgar herd of mankind should regard him as a saint. Aye, a base and artful hypocrite, who to spite me in my childhood, converted my days of full enjoyment into long, long hours of tears and stripes—aye, even stripes and mortifications."

"Your Majesty surprises me—I did not know, until this moment, that Anno of Cologne had ever done you personal wrong," said Sigefrid.

"Then listen—and see by what a base device he lured me from my mother's side,

when I was but a mere boy," continued Henry. "Anno was my father's confessor, and so cruel was he to that good, weak man, that he has been known to impose upon him—upon his sovereign—the Emperor—so harsh and brutal a penance as the discipline—I vow to you that he has actually compelled the Emperor, before he placed upon his shoulders the imperial robes, to have his flesh bruised and mangled by the torturing whip of the discipline, as if he were a malefactor. My father was sometimes so pious, that he forgot he was an Emperor ; but Anno never was so forgetful. He always remembered that he was confessor to the Emperor ; and he won fame for himself at my father's cost ; for the same man who insisted that the Emperor should thus misuse his royal person, if he had but expressed a single word in anger, would, if his penitent were a poor man, be content with giving him absolution on the condition of saying a few prayers. And so Anno made himself

loved by the mob—and that too as a priest, who was a foe to the rich, and a friend to the poor. Artful, designing, scheming hypocrite that he is, and fully as ambitious as he is artful. Upon discovering that my father's death deprived him of the power he had hitherto exercised—that all the influence of the state was in the hands of my mother, because she had the personal charge of me, the infant King of Germany, he resolved upon snatching me away from her, and as he could not make the attempt by open force, he resolved upon accomplishing it by means of a foul and cunning device.

“ My good mother ! tender and kind, and pious as she is, always bore in mind that though an infant, I was still a king—that as a king I had a right to have my wishes consulted and that on no account was I to be thwarted. Thus was I passing my childhood, when one day, as I was amusing myself on St. Swibert's isle, in the Rhine, I was

visited by Anno the Archbishop, Otho, the Duke of Bavaria, and three other conspirators—villains, whose audacious deed has left a hot and burning brand in my memory—never to be effaced, never to be appeased—never—not even by their blood. What say you, Diedrich, for in such a case you are a better judge than an Archbishop. Should such an offence be pardoned ?”

“ *Never*,” growled Diedrich, as the wild beast growls, when it scents from a distance the blood of its destined prey.

“ *Never — never*,” continued Henry. “ But observe how this old hypocrite of Cologne can gild over with sweet smiles and honeyed words the most malignant designs. I was a child, amusing myself with companions of my own age, and attended by my mother, and guarded by our military retainers. I was so amusing myself on the island, when Anno of Cologne, and Otho, the Duke of Bavaria, landed there. They were hospitably received—and when the feast was over, Anno prayed

of me to come on board and inspect a magnificent barge, recently constructed for him. I did so. I perceived that he had waiting at the water's edge a vessel, that seemed to be formed on the outside of one enormous sea-shell, and its interior lined with mother-of-pearl—that the seats were composed of silver, and the oars of burnished gold were handled by men, who wore the helmets and armour of the ancient Romans, whilst sounds of ravishing music came from beneath the decks, and filled the island, the river and the Rhineland around with a melodious harmony. Entranced by the vision of this gorgeous barge, I bounded into it with Anno and Otho, and the moment I did so, it moved off unexpectedly from the island. It was whilst I was engaged in examining its structure and parts, that I became terrified upon beholding that the vigorous oarsmen had pushed us off more than a mile from the island; and there sprung, as if by magic, out of all parts of the boat,

bands of armed and ferocious looking men.

“ And thus was I—a King—a boy—entrapped and carried off from the empress my mother, and that too by means of the artful wiles of an Archbishop—of my father’s Confessor ! If then Anno now accuses me of treachery, of deceit, of perfidy, let it rest upon his conscience, that the successful practice of such vices was first acquired from his own example—the pious, good man that he is !

“ When I saw that I had been thus deceived—and, at the same time, beheld myself surrounded with men whose swords were drawn, my conviction was that I had been thus carried off, for the purpose of being murdered ; and under that conviction, and without condescending to reproach them for their treachery, or to appeal to them for their pity, I made one bound from the place where I stood, and plunged headlong into the waters of the Rhine !

“ I can remember no more than hearing an astounding shriek of horror as the waters closed over my head. I was, subsequently, told that Duke Otho dashed into the water after me, and bore me back, apparently lifeless, to the barge. He saved my life, indeed, but then he had first forced me to place it in danger. I thanked him for saving me: with the expression of those thanks I owe him no more of gratitude. I have yet to repay him for his treason and his baseness in carrying me away.

“ When I recovered the complete use of reason, I saw Anno kneeling by my side, and—the hypocrite!—weeping. He assured me, that, however distasteful it might be, what he had done was solely for my own benefit; that under my mother’s tutelage my morals and my education were so utterly neglected, that if I were to grow up to be a man, indulged as I had been, and so ignorant, that I would be absolutely unfitted to rule over others, both by temper, and my want of knowledge;

that I might be deprived of my crown ; and that the reason he had seized upon my person was to correct my evil habits, and improve my mind. Such were, at the time, the pretexts put forward by him for the gratification of his ambition, and thus depriving me of the pleasures I had until then enjoyed. According to his own account, now given of me to Hildebrand, my evil habits have not been corrected; whilst as to my ignorance it was, I admit, removed—curses on his hand—*by the scourge*—with the fear of which he forced me to learn—to read, to write, to study. Aye—he did force harshly into my hand one powerful weapon—Knowledge. Let *him* and *his* now beware how I use it—he shall not descend to his grave without bitterly lamenting that he bestowed it—He shall shed ten tears for every one that I did, as a boy, in acquiring that knowledge.”

The thoughts of his fancied wrongs as a boy had excited Henry. He started up from his chair and paced up and down

the room for a few minutes, whilst his movements were followed in silence by the eyes of his guests. Diedrich merely watching him, as the wolf-dog does his master, and ready to execute any command that may be given, whether it be to lie down and sleep, or to fly at the throat of the stranger, with whom that master has been conversing. Sigefrid looked and watched Henry also, but he did so, with such strong fear, and uncontrollable repulsion, that his looks could not disguise his sentiments from his keen-sighted sovereign. Henry perceived this, and determined, if he could, to re-acquire the confidence of one whom he knew to be a timid, but still powerful and ambitious prelate. It was therefore with the deliberate design of alarming the mind, and provoking the covetousness of the Archbishop that Henry thus addressed him :

“ My good, my faithful friend, Sigefrid, I place such confidence in you, that I cannot disguise from you, my feelings respect-

ing Anno, who, according to your own account, and most true and accurate I am sure it is, still persecutes me with his calumnies, and these, too, addressed to the most powerful, (and, as you know,) influential man at Rome. From him I have borne my wrongs more patiently hitherto than I should have done. I must make him, and every other enemy I have, feel that a King is not to be heedlessly provoked, nor insulted with impunity. Now, be sure of this—that for his letter addressed to Rome, I shall have him driven from Cologne—not by my soldiers ; but by his own citizens. I will prove to him that the Colognese love the *sinner*, as he calls me, more than *the saint*, that he fancies himself to be. He is not the first bishop that *my friends* have so banished. I hope he may be the last. But my vengeance shall not stop there—the cousin that he most loves—the only creature in the world that I believe he does love, except himself, is Bruno. Anno has had him appointed

Bishop of Osnabruck. To that place Bruno is now travelling. Into that place, he never shall enter as Bishop. Shall he Diedrich ?”

“*No !*” shouted Diedrich, flinging himself back on the seat, and apparently as little disposed for speaking, as he was now capable of eating or drinking any more.

“ When the blunt, plain-spoken Diedrich says ‘no,’ to anything, its fulfillment becomes an impossibility,” observed Henry, and then, as if he had noticed but for the first time, the untasted goblet that was placed before the Archbishop, “ But you have not yet tasted the wine. It is from the Rhine. Do not object to drink it, for our vine-dressers are punctual in paying the tithes of every vintage to the Archbishop of Mayence. And now that I allude to tithes, I wish to know how goes on the collection of the tithes claimed by you in Thuringia, and in Saxony ?”

This question, put by the King, produced an instantaneous change in the countenance of the archbishop. All traces of fear vanished, and every symptom of repulsion disappeared, when the prelate found that a question was addressed to him, by the sovereign, upon a subject, which he had set his whole heart and soul upon.

“Alas ! my liege,” replied the archbishop, “the answer given to me by Thuringians and Saxons is the same. They will pay me no tithes.”

“And wherefore ?” asked Henry. “Assuredly the Archbishop of Mayence would demand nothing but what the church sanctions ?”

“God forbid ! it should be otherwise,” answered the archbishop. “I demand tithes from districts that lie within my archiepiscopal principality. The Thuringians and Saxons alone refuse to pay tithes ; and they alledge as the reason for their refusal, that the claim is one, till now, unheard

of, and therefore one, to the enforcement of which, they will not submit. They say, they will not collect tithes for me to expend the produce in Mayence, far away from them ; that where there is a monastery which gives back to the poor, the tithes gathered from rich and poor, they will pay them and no where else ; that where there are not bishops required, nor priests wanted, they will pay no tithes to an archbishop ; that, in short, they hold their lands tithe-free, and will not pay them to noble, prince, king, nor archbishop ; that such is the custom of the Saxon race as sanctioned by their conqueror, Charlemagne, and they will die sooner than submit to be deprived of their ancient rights and immunities."

" Oh ! this is but the brawling of a mob of serfs," observed Henry, " and merely worthy of the scoff of a court-jester. Why not send your knights and military retainers amongst them, and force them, by

the edge of the sword, to pay what you demand?"

"I have done so," replied Sigefrid, "and I regret to say that, wherever my armed men appeared, the whole country rose in insurrection against them. Many of my force were killed, and the others, by a speedy retreat, with difficulty saved themselves from annihilation. I have failed—utterly failed. They have despised the prayers of my messengers, and broken the swords of my retainers; and now, I am not only defrauded of my rights, but I am contemned for demanding what I had not the power of exacting."

"This is serious news indeed, Sigefrid. It seems to me that you must have more opponents in Thuringia and Saxony to your claims than the mere dull tillers of the fields," remarked Henry.

"Alas! I have," replied the Archbishop. "The Saxon nobles, who ought to make common cause with me, are arrayed against

me. Their leader is Otho, Duke of Bavaria."

"What! my old persecutor—he, who kidnapped me on the Rhine," interrupted Henry.

"It is the same, and with him, and as instigators, I am told, of this opposition are the Count Dedi, his wife Adela, Dedi, the younger, and the young Duke Magnus," continued Sigebert.

"I know them all, well and thoroughly. Count Dedi," said Henry, "is one of those old veterans in the field, who regards every day he rises as a day on which he has to fight a great battle; he commences his morning by entrenching himself in a psalter-full of prayers, and breaks his fast as if he were reconnoitering a foe, and never utters a word, that he is not fearful it may expose him to a surprise—he dines with a homily before him, as if he had his front guarded by a strong troop of horse; and at last goes to bed singing a hymn, as if he had won a victory over

—himself, or somebody else. He is a dangerous foe, because he is a cautious man. As to his son—he has but one wish in the world—it is to see a great battle fought. He is a youth with much courage, and no brains. As to the Countess Adela, the best thing I can say of her, is that she is a woman, and the worst thing I wish to say of her is, that she is an old woman—and, as spiteful against me, as if she had always been an ugly woman. Then as to the last of those doughty conspirators against your lawful claims—the poor little Duke Magnus—there can, assuredly, be no harm in him. He has, I am told, the appearance of a man, with the mind, manners, and morals of a boy; and having been educated in a monastery, he lives in the world as if he had become a monk.”

As Henry gave utterance to these words there came, suddenly rushing into the chamber, that confused murmur of sounds which always arises from a great multitude of persons, however quiescent, when

densely pressed together, and which seems like the surging of a mighty sea, if its peaceful onward course is impeded, though it cannot be interrupted by some temporary obstacle ; and whilst this confused din continued, and, as it appeared, filled the air, it was broken—but only for an instant—by a sudden clash of arms, followed by one or two cries, and then—the sound appeared to disperse, as quickly, and as unexpectedly as it had arisen.

As the first murmur penetrated the chamber, Diedrich started from the seat on which he had been reposing, and as if his ear were as sure a guide to him as his sense of smelling is to the blood-hound, an instant's watchful listening appeared to apprise him, that no exertion on his part, as a warrior, would be required, and therefore he sunk back again into his half-recumbent, half-sitting attitude. It was not so with the Arch-bishop, who, clasping Henry's left hand, between both his own, seemed to listen to

those distant sounds in an agony of terror. Henry looked to Diedrich, and perceiving the manner in which he treated this unexpected incident, remained himself unmoved. He was about to assure Sigefrid, that no danger need be apprehended, when he perceived that some one had entered the room, and had noiselessly knelt down and kissed his knee. He looked at the courtier who bent his head before him, and then gazed in his face—and as the eyes of king and courtier met, Henry started up from his chair, and exclaimed :

“ Good Heavens ! Werenher, what has befallen you ?—your limbs totter, your lips tremble, your face is pallid as that of a corpse, except that upon your forehead and right cheek there is a trace of red—so red, that I would almost swear some one had spurted blood upon you. Is it so ? ”

“ I felt suddenly ill as I entered the fortress,” replied Werenher ; “ but still I deemed it to be my duty to apprise your Majesty at once, that I have succeeded in

my enterprise—fully, and I trust to your satisfaction. I would not, however, for that alone have intruded on your Majesty's presence at this moment ; but that I have intelligence for you that will not brook delay."

" And what may that be, which even in your estimation can be more important than the accomplishment of the command I confided to you ?" enquired Henry, somewhat irritated upon finding that in the opinion of his servants and courtiers anything could possibly be of more consequence than the execution of an order that he had given.

" It is that Magnus the Duke of Saxony, Otho Duke of Bavaria, the Dedis, father and son, with the Countess Adela are at this moment in Frankfort."

" In Frankfort !" exclaimed Henry and the Archbishop in the one breath, and quite taken by surprise.

" Yes—and I believe for some treasonable purpose," said Werenher, " for I my-

self recognised, as I entered the portal, the younger Dedi disguised as a Saxon seif. As to Magnus, I am aware that he has pretensions that run counter to the desires of your Majesty."

"*He!*—pretensions!—opposed to *me!*" exclaimed Henry, his face flushing with scorn and indignation.

"Yes," continued Werenher, "but so purely personal and boyish, that they are more worthy of your mirth than of your anger. The nature of them I can alone confide to your Majesty in private."

"If he place himself," said Henry, "but for an iustant—aye a single instant in my path, he must be—"

As he spoke these words, he perceived that Diedrich had placed his hand upon his sword. The action reminded Henry that he ought to be more cautious, especially in presence of the Archbishop, and he continued by saying :

"He must be—*watched*. Thanks, Diedrich, this is not a case in which your ser-

vices will be required. You must reserve all proofs of your zeal for the cousin of the Archbishop of Cologne. As to Magnus, and Otho, and the Dedis, I can rely upon the labours and the exertions of my assured friends and courtiers, the devoted Werenher, the astute Egen, and the bold Lieman. If the parties," continued Henry, addressing himself to Werenher, "that you speak of are in Frankfort, I am confident, from what I know of them, they are not living here concealed. It is for you to surround them with spies, so that every movement of theirs may be watched, and every word spoken by them faithfully reported to me. We may thus learn why they are now in Frankfort, and then defy them, should they contemplate anything I may regard as mischievous."

"Your Majesty," replied Werenher, "imposes upon me a task much more difficult to accomplish than may, at first sight, appear. There is not to be found in Frankfort a single slave who is not a Saxon.

The Saxons are the domestic servants of the Frankforters. Even this royal palace is surrounded by a colony of Saxons, the descendants of those who were placed here by the mighty Charlemagne ; and, of all those Saxons, there is not a man, nor even a woman, that does not look up to Magnus, and all his relations as the chieftains of their race—as the persons to whom their loyalty is due, far more than to your Majesty. In them and through them they hope for the regeneration and the independence of their race, and their nation ; whilst they hate the Franks with an intense malignity of hatred, which none but a conquered and an enslaved people ever feel. How then am I to induce one of these—not to say, many of them—to betray those they love, for the sake of those they hate ?”

“ You exaggerate the difficulties, Werenher,” observed Henry, “ in order that we may admire you the more for having overcome them. Ply the men with as

much wine as they can drink, and bestow upon them more gold than they can ask; give to the women the most gaudy trinkets they may crave; and if they resist your temptation, then they are not Saxons but angels. And now I must beg both you and my trusty friend Diedrich to retire, for I wish to make my confession to this truly pious Archbishop."

"I go," replied Werenher, "but before I do so, I assure you, I have not, in the least degree, exaggerated the difficulties of the task you have assigned to me. I know well how much the Saxons abominate us, and how completely they are devoted to their Princes. Why, even now—it required but a single word from Dedi the younger, and they would have attacked your guards, and attempted to rescue your prisoner."

"I thank the Dedis," said Henry, sneeringly, "for not making an attempt, which they must have known would have been vain, in the face of that army, with which they are aware I have Frankfort at this

moment garrisoned. But go—let Egen know I may require his services. Otho of Bavaria annoys me. I want his dukedom for some surer friend than he will ever prove to me.”

“I take my leave,” said Werenher, lowly bowing to his Majesty. Diedrich had already left the apartment, without making any obeisance, or uttering a single word.

“And now,” observed Henry, “my good Lord Archbishop, that we are completely alone, I wish to speak to you of a matter that presses very heavily upon my conscience, and in which you can afford me material relief.”

“In all that the Church does not absolutely prohibit, your Majesty may count upon my services,” was the reply of Sigefrid.

“I thank—gratefully thank you—and be assured my gratitude shall be evinced in that way which I think will be most pleasing to you—in not merely aiding you in the collection of your tithes, but in com-

selling the payment of them to you, both by Thuringians and Saxons," was the artful remark of Henry.

"I am all attention to your Majesty," said the Archbishop, elated with the promise the King thus gave him.

"And observe," continued Henry, "in the question of this enforcement of tithes, I consider that our interests are identified; for, if the Saxons are bound to pay them to you, as Archbishop, they also are under an obligation of giving them to me, as their Sovereign. The tithes so payable by them are not only a badge of their conquest, but they were imposed by Charlemagne as the proof—*the test*, that the Ancient Saxons had abandoned the errors of idolatry, and that they had become true Christians. The payment of tithes is the condition of their freedom; and that freedom, they prove they are no longer worthy to enjoy, when they refuse to pay tithes to Christian Kings, Princes, and Prelates. By the refusal, they shall

be made to feel that their privileges have been forfeited. Do I take a just view, think you, of this question ?

“So just, so well supported by proof, and so demonstrable by ancient documents, that I cannot but congratulate your Majesty on the result of your researches. Assuredly, the laborious instructions of Anno were not, in your case, bestowed upon an ungrateful soil,” was the answer of the Archbishop.

Henry knew that the words spoken by Sigefrid, were pronounced as a compliment ; but his conscience bestowed upon them a meaning, they were never intended to convey ; for he felt them at the same time to be a sarcasm, a rebuke, and a reproach. Henry, however, was not a man to betray his feelings of irritation, when it was his interest, by concealing them, to enlist in his behalf the sympathies, or to win the favour, of those with whom he conversed. He, therefore, continued the conversation in the same calm tones, and

gentle, insinuating voice, with which he had commenced it, by remarking :—

“I have long noticed the iniquitous and indefensible opposition thus made to the demand for *our* tithes—for I regard your claim as of equal value with my own—and having noticed, I have resolved to crush your opponents. I have been for months, I might say, for years, preparing for the struggle. It is with this object, that I have erected fortresses in various parts of Saxony, and each of these fortresses, when completed, I have had manned with stipendary soldiers on whose absolute fidelity, and personal devotion to myself I could place the most perfect reliance. I am then, I may affirm, prepared for war. I have but to give the signal, and it is begun; and once begun, our victory is secure. In this case, I regard myself as the Champion of the Church; but no Churchman, much less the pious Sigefrid, the Archbishop of Mayence, could wish to see *his Champion*

exposed to all the dangers of warfare, with a conscience oppressed by sin. And here it is—upon this tender point of conscience—that I shall require the soothing aid, and salutary assistance of you, good Sigefrid.

“I need not tell you, my Reverend Archbishop, of that which must have reached you by rumour—the foul hag that sits at the palace gates of Kings, and trumpets forth to the world their slightest misdeeds—I need not admit that my youth has not been, and is not even now, free from the practise of those sins, which keep pace with the juvenile years of most men. I admit, that I do, with justice, bear the reputation of being a bad husband; and yet, I may say, in my own vindication, that I am not as wicked as I appear to be. I was not more than fifteen years of age, when motives of policy induced those who had care of me as a King to force upon me a marriage with the Italian maiden, Bertha. It was a marriage—not a union

—then most odious, as it has ever since, been most repugnant to me.

“I admit to you, as I am prepared to avow to the world, that Bertha is deserving of the respect of all persons—that she is amiable, excellent, charitable—and all that man could desire to see of virtue in a female, but still she is, now and ever has been, so personally odious to me, that I never could, and never can treat her, or consider her as my wife: I seek then to be separated from my maiden-wife, who has ever lived with me, as the saintly Cunigunda lived with the blessed Emperor Henry—totally and absolutely separated from her husband.

“I wish to be divorced from Bertha, in order that, choosing some dame for my wife, who can win my love and secure my affections, I may cease to live, as I confess I have been, in a state of sin.

“Let the Church but free her champion from this marriage, and then with a safe conscience I can prosecute the war against the Saxons for tithes. The Church can, if

she will, pronounce such a divorce ; and if Sigefrid, the Archbishop of Mayence, declares that he is favourable to a divorce, there are few prelates in Germany, I am conscious, who will presume to array themselves against his opinion, or dispute his judgment. What say you, Sigefrid ?”

“ That Your Majesty,” replied Sigefrid, musing, “ submits to my consideration a very nice and difficult point. Taking, as I am bound to do, that all, Your Majesty now states to me, is a fact, which can be proved upon oath ; and, especially, that you and Queen Bertha have been, in name, but man and wife ; then I can hold out the hope to you of a successful issue to your suit ; and taking, as I say, that this is capable of proof, I will struggle to promote the divorce. I will, I say, labour with each of the prelates in private, to induce them to adopt my views, and to act in coincidence with your wishes.”

“ But how soon shall all this be done ? How many months or years may be wasted

in useless negotiations?" enquired Henry, somewhat impatiently.

"Within three weeks of this time, I trust," said Sigefrid. "I will summon a synod in Frankfort, for to-morrow three weeks, and I shall labour, meanwhile, to have it as fully attended as I can by those who adopt my views. If others should be there who may differ from us, I may deplore, but I cannot prevent it; for once a Synod is convoked by me, all the bishops will be entitled to a voice in its deliberations. In such a task as this, not a moment is to be lost. I shall, therefore, this very night travel to Mayence, and commence, at the earliest dawn, to toil for you."

"Thanks," said Henry, "many thanks—and bear in mind, that once the divorce is pronounced, I shall march, with all the soldiers I can collect, into Saxony. And now, good Sigefrid, I beg of you to bestow upon me your blessing. It may give me the grace to live virtuously until I have again the happiness of seeing you."

Henry, as he spoke these words, bent his knee, and the Archbishop, laying his hand upon the monarch's head, pronounced a benediction upon him, and then hurried from the room.

The jibing smile, that curled the lip of Henry, when he knelt, in seeming humility, before the Archbishop, still remained as he stood erect, and bestowed upon the departing Priest a laugh expressive of supreme contempt.

“The thought of his unpaid tithes,” so communed Henry with himself, “will make that avaricious old man labour for my divorce, with all the ardour of a wooer, who pines to hasten onward the day fixed for his marriage. He is my dupe, at the very time, he fancies that I am but an instrument in his hand ; and thinks it is my divorce alone that will induce me to do that, on which I have long since determined—to quell the proud spirit of the Saxons, and at the same time to appropriate to

myself all the wealth of which I know them to be possessed.

“ Here is this old man—without passions to indulge, without tastes to gratify—in possession of what must have ever been the highest point of his ambition, the princely archbishopric of Mayence. Here, he is not knowing what to do with all his wealth, yet craving for more, and in his desire to obtain it, perilling his soul upon a doubtful point—my right to be divorced from Bertha.

“ And yet the very man that does this will not move a step, if he be convinced that what he is asked to do is prohibited by the rules and ordinances of the church !

“ What a strange contradiction is this ! or, is not the Archbishop of Mayence like the common herd of mankind ? Complete fools upon one particular point, and half-knaves upon every other—rigidly obstinate upon minor questions, that are connected

with their fancied obligations to the next world ; and profligately lax in their dealings with each other, in the great affairs of this life. Punctilious about that which after all may be doubtful, and unscrupulous about that which is certain ; ready to sacrifice themselves for that which is unknown, and still more ready to sacrifice others, for that which is known. Their conscience, or that thing, they call their conscience, wavers between their fears, and their wishes ; and it is ever ready to remain quiescent as long as the fulfilment of the latter is secure ; it never disturbs them until disappointment proves to them that their miscalculations in this world will bring down with it punishment not merely here, but hereafter.

“ Who, but God himself, can judge of the sincerity, or the insincerity of a man like the Archbishop of Mayence ? Who else, but God, can penetrate the hauberk of inconsistency that encases him, and wind-

ing into the innermost folds of his heart, can see there *the poor soul—the man himself*—as he cowers in his unreasoning avarice, his unmeaning covetousness, and along with these, his incomprehensible faith, and his incredible practices of piety? My slave, I feel that he is, up to a certain point; and yet, if I pass beyond that point, I am conscious, that this weak, timid man would be my opponent, and even encounter death sooner than yield to me.

“Why is this? Because, in the one case, I have only to deal with *the man*, and, in the other, with the Lord Archbishop—the spiritual prince and *Prelate of Mayence*. Because, in the one case, he kneels at the foot of my throne; and, in the other, he can raise, as a barrier, between him, and me, the altar-rails of the sanctuary.

“As a *temporal* prince, I am his *king*—as a *spiritual* prince, I am not his *lord*. I can command him in all places but within the Cathedral of Mayence, and

there—arrayed in his pontifical robes, with the mitre on his head, and the crosier in his hand, he owes his allegiance not to *me*, but to his *Suzerain*—the Pope of Rome.

“ And it is because I cannot command him as *my* Archbishop, that I have to *beg* the divorce from him—I have to lie, and fawn, and coin a false tale for him, *my subject*, whom I ought to be able to *order* to pronounce my divorce, and, if he refused—strip him of his mitre, send him to a dungeon, or consign him to my headsman.

“ And wherefore is all this? Because of the foolish piety of my ancestors : because they chose, in their veneration for the See of Peter, to make themselves its vassal-patricians, its subject-Emperors ; rendering the very bestowal of our imperial crown upon us, conditional upon our precedent oath to maintain intact the rights, privileges, and prerogatives that attach to the patrimony of St. Peter.

“ Should this be so ? No. The thought of the chains which the Roman Pontiff

can cast upon me—when he so willeth—gall, and fret me, and even now fetter my free actions—aye, my very words, and compel me to stoop to a hypocrisy that I abhor, and to artifices that I detest.

“Ought it to be so? No. I am the representative of the Roman Emperors. The imperial throne of the West, that I now occupy, was held by those of whom I am one—the *Cæsars*. Each of these was at the same time himself ‘*the Emperor*,’ and ‘*the Supreme Pontiff*,’—the *Imperator*, and *Pontifex Maximus*. Their word was law, in all that related to civil life, as well as the affairs of religion—and to disobey them, in either case, was death. And what a life was theirs! What pleasures waited on them! What enjoyments courted them! All things, on which they set their eyes, were theirs. Wealth, youth, beauty stood before them as their slaves, and every luxury from the West to the South wooed them. Then, a Commodus could command the haughtiest, proudest Senator to descend

into the Arena as a gladiator, and he might promote the meanest servants of his pleasure to the highest offices in the State, and no man dare say him nay : whilst a Heliogabulus could constitute a Senate of matrons, and men learn wisdom from such a Diet of beauty, by their profound decisions upon precedence and costumes !

“ I am the representative of these men. Why am I not like to them ? Why should not my life be like to theirs ?—one bright, unbroken day of pleasure, without a pause, and without a night—until that night—death, which awaits us all—came upon them.

“ In what do I differ from them ? I am—the Emperor : my ardent youth is eager as theirs to plunge into a boundless sea of enjoyment. And yet I am restrained—I dare not do many things that I would, and others I am compelled to do by stealth, like the abduction of this unknown beauty of Aschaffenburg, of whom Egen has spoken to me in such rapturous praises. I

am compelled to disguise those things, because I can only be an Emperor, and can never be—the Supreme Pontiff!

“ Shall then this state of things continue? No. I can never recover again, probably, all those powers and privileges over the Roman Pontiffs, which Constantine parted with when he covered the bare, and humble heads of the Popes with the Cap of Liberty, and that they have since converted into a Princely Crown. I cannot assume, as a Christian Emperor, those functions which belonged to the Pagan Emperors; but surrounded as I am by men willing to be slaves, and ready to buy from me, with gold, abbacies, and mitres, it will be strange, if I cannot discover amongst the herd of simoniacal priests and monks, many willing to assume to themselves the name ‘*Pope*’ when I, as the Emperor bestow it upon them: and, if I do but obtain one such, then I shall be able, by deputy, to enjoy all the priveleges of a Pontiff. And with a Pope willing to obey

me, the world lies prostrate and helpless before me! To trample my opponents under my feet as so many worthless weeds, and to cull from it all that gives me most pleasure, as its sweetest flowers, to delight my eyes and refresh my senses!

“But hold!” said Henry, checking himself as he quaffed off a full bumper of wine. “But hold,” he continued, “to do all this—to attain what is the object of my most earnest desire—much care, much thought, much artifice upon my part will be necessary. In fighting against Rome, I shall have to contend with a vigilant, active, unrelenting foe. A premature movement on my part may render the success of my plan impracticable. I see the disadvantages and advantages of my position. I have arrayed against me the prejudices and the superstitions of mankind—those little household deities, of which each man has an idol, of some form or fashion, in his own heart, and which, as long as he worships, he fancies he is not, though

covered with crimes, altogether a reprobate. Rome knows this, and has the secret of touching these idols, and thus moving the hidden springs in the hearts of mortals—She can command men's consciences to do that, by which they lose nothing in wealth, houses, or land. She has with her their prejudices and their superstitions, whilst on my side are the stronger combatants—the *passions*. I have it in my power to evoke first, and to gratify afterwards, the sensuality and the avarice of my adherents ; and it is difficult to believe that they will not master all those weakly things called virtues, to which my opponents may appeal."

" Oh ! that all who adhere to me were like my trusty Diedrich : a wolf-dog, that can think, and act, and never trouble me with his scruples. Then indeed the battle could be but a short one between the Imperial crown and the tiara—a good sword, and a sure dagger would bring it to a successful termination."

“It is not so, and therefore I must play the hypocrite—speak false words to false men, who know that the words are false, and yet seek to quiet their consciences by pretending to believe them true. Base wretches as they are, I loathe them all—and the more loathe them, when I compare them with Diedrich.”

“I pray your Majesty’s pardon, if I have disturbed you,” said Egen, here entering the chamber; “I was told that you commanded my attendance.”

“I did, Egen,” answered Henry, “I wished to know how fares the lady you admire so much.”

“She is still oppressed with grief at the sudden removal from her family,” said Egen. “At present she is totally unconscious of the honour your Majesty has conferred upon her, in deigning to direct she should be conveyed to one of your castles. Your Majesty’s desire of her being received in her chamber by two of your female attendants, dressed in the

garb of nuns, and especially by hearing one of them who calls herself ‘the Sister Adelaide,’ directing that sentinels should be placed at her door, night and day, to guard her from intrusion, have tended to tranquillise her mind.”

“I rejoice to hear it,” observed Henry. “There is nothing more hateful to my sight than a weeping woman. I detest Queen Bertha, because she is always in tears. A woman should never presume to appear in the presence of a monarch unless her face be decked with smiles. *Tears are so selfish*—they prove that a woman is thinking of herself and not of *me*. But enough of this new toy. Come, Egen, with me to my bed-chamber. I shall there disclose to you a project, in the execution of which, there will be required, on your part, as much wit as boldness.”

“My life is your Majesty’s—dispose of it as you will. If I lose it in serving you, then it will be well employed for so kind

and so generous a master," answered Egen.

" I know well your fidelity, Egen ; but I know not how I can adequately reward it," said Henry, with his constant, sweet, dubious smile upon his rosy lips.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTIVE AND THE JAILER.

BEATRICE was a prisoner in the Castle of Frankfort, which from its strength of position, thickness of wall, and number of defenders might be regarded as a fortress, but from its vastness, richness, and magnificence was more generally designated as the palace of the German Kings in this portion of their wide-spread dominions. The apartment, in which Beatrice was confined, was a square chamber, the sides of

which were covered with magnificent tapestry, worked in gold, and brilliant colors, and proving to what a degree of perfection the art of embroidery had then been carried. Ornaments of gold, and silver and bronze were to be seen strewn about—and some of them, especially the small statues, were moulded with such exquisite grace, that it was plain they had descended to the German King, as heir-looms of that Roman Empire, of which he assumed to be the representative. The centre of the room was lighted by, what would now be called, a small window, and which, shewed to the occupant of the chamber that it constituted the recess between two projecting towers on both sides, and that it was not only overlooked by them, but that in case of necessity the room itself could be commanded by the arrow-shots of the towers that looked into it. This room, which seemed to have been fitted up for the care of any prisoners on whom it might be desirable to

exhibit at the same time every desire for their convenience, and their careful keeping, looked down upon the smooth waters of the river Maine, as they glided over that eventful ford, which in the year 783, had been pointed out to the flying *Franks*, by a timid deer, at a moment when, but for that discovery, they must have fallen victims to the unrelenting vengeance of Wit-tikind, and the undying hatred of the remorseless Saxons.

It was at the window of this apartment that Beatrice sat gazing listlessly upon the Ford-of-the-Franks. She was worn out with want of sleep and of food ; for she had carefully attended to the words of the Countess—she “neither eat nor drank”—she had not even moistened her lips with a single drop of water. It was thus she sat with aching head and saddened heart, all her feelings engrossed with the one thought—the agonizing despair of her mother upon discovering her abduction. With the first dawn of the coming day she had taken her

seat at that window, and the day had advanced about five hours, when, she knew not why, she found her eye attracted to what appeared to her to be a little white banner, that fluttered upon one of the towers of the cathedral, at some distance from her, and all communication with which was cut off by the interfluent stream of the Maine. Her eye had observed this long before her mind had attended to it. She could not tell when she had first noticed it, nor why she now thought there was anything strange in its appearance. She was only certain of this, that when she first looked upon the cathedral, the white flag was not there, and now, so confused were her faculties, by her sleepless grief, that she was as little certain whether it had been there a minute, or, an hour before it first induced her to watch its tremulous movements. The sight of that flag inspired her with hope. It was the emblem of peace and of purity ; and as it was upon the Church of God—it was significant of hope ; and it seemed

to bid her place all her confidence in Him to Whose honor and glory that very edifice had been erected by the greatest hero of Christianity—Charlemagne. A senseless, mindless thing it was that white little fluttering flag ; and Beatrice knew it was so. Yet, since she had last seen her home, it was the only thing that denoted ought of good to her. As such she regarded it—as such it comforted her ; and for the first time, since she had been a captive, as she gazed upon it, a gush of tears came to her eyes, which relieved and soothed her heart. For the first time in her life, she felt that there was a consolation in tears—for the first time she experienced the truth of what had been so often told to her, by her mother, and the honest Agatha—that it is good to weep, if we can be but conscious that our tears are shed, not in a repining, but a submissive spirit, to whatever evils or trials God may choose to subject us.

So was Beatrice weeping, and gaining fresh strength for new trials as she wept, when a young and beautiful woman, arrayed in the garb of a nun, entered the room, and started back, almost with dismay, when she perceived how changed had become in the course of a few hours, the appearance of Beatrice.

“My child,” she said, “if you persist in this despairing grief, but three days longer, you will certainly kill yourself, Why, you have neither eaten, nor drank, nor slept since you came here.”

“Nor will I do so, as long as I am a prisoner here,” replied Beatrice, “unless the request I made last night be complied with—that of having, as an attendant, one of those poor Saxon women, that I saw upon landing, and who manifested so much sympathy for an unknown captive.”

“But in case I comply with your request,” said the woman, who called herself Sister Adelaide, “will you promise to

perform for me that which I shall ask ?”

“Certainly, Sister Adelaide,” answered Beatrice ; “for one in your holy garb could make no improper request.”

“It is,” replied Sister Adelaide, “that you will cast away from you those soiled habiliments in which you have travelled, and array yourself in the robes of a novice : I ask no more.”

“And that I consent to do,” was the answer of Beatrice.

In a few minutes afterwards, sister Adelaide led into the room a tall, gawky-looking Saxon girl—one so thin in figure, and so juvenile in face, and so fresh in complexion, that she did not appear to be more than sixteen years of age, and in whose big, dull, grey eyes there did not seem to be a spark of intelligence.

“Here,” said the sister Adelaide, “is the first Saxon maiden I could find. She was standing at the fortress portal, and endeavouring to persuade the guards stationed

there to become the purchasers of some of the wild flowers, which she has gathered in the adjoining forest, when I had her called before you. She is well known, the guards assured me, for her innocence and simplicity, and is generally denominated, amongst her people, by the familiar name of Gretchen."

"And that is the name of an honest girl—it is no false name," drawled out the Saxon maiden.

"I fear," observed the Sister Adelaide, "she will be but an awkward tire-woman."

"Not at all—not at all," replied Gretchen with somewhat more animation. "There is no one in the village can equal Gretchen in decorating the hair with flowers. In two minutes I can weave a wreath of *Magnus* primroses, and wisdom-honeysuckles which even *Adela*, the great Countess Dedi, would not be ashamed to wear."

"I pray you, Sister Adelaide, let this poor, innocent, half-witted maiden remain

with me. I am quite prepared to excuse any awkwardness she may exhibit, for the sake of listening to her innocent prattle. Its very incoherency may be a distraction to my grief."

Such was the request that Beatrice made of the Nun. It was immediately complied with, Beatrice having again promised to change her dress. Adelaide then quitted the room, leaving the two young women, or rather girls, quite alone.

Gretchen had a large basket filled with wild flowers on her arm, and the moment that the Sister Adelaide quitted the room, she seated herself on the floor, and commenced, as if the matter on which she was employed, was one of vital importance, to take the several flowers, one by one, from the basket, and in so doing, to ask Beatrice if she knew the name of each, and if she did, to tell it to her. Beatrice answered all her questions, and as she did so, Gretchen laughed, not boisterously, but still so loudly that the idiotic sounds of her mirth might be heard

by any one, who purposely, or by chance was listening to their conversation. As the name of each flower was told to her, Gretchen carefully placed it on the floor, so as that all the flowers of the same species were accurately sorted from the rest.

Both maidens were thus engaged for about a quarter of an hour, the one in asking the names of the flowers, the other in answering them, and then in seeing her strange companion anxiously arranging each, with those that resembled it, around her. At last Beatrice became weary in watching what was, to her, apparently an unmeaning proceeding. Gretchen did not perceive this, for she said :

“ And now, lady, here is a flower that is never known to grow but beneath a tree that shades the banks of the Maine. Can you tell me what it is called ?”

Beatrice instead of answering her question, said :

“ I cannot ; and even if I could, instead of answering your question, I would ask

you, how you came, when you entered this room, to mention the names of *Magnus* and of *Adela*."

"What a stupid fool I am," said Gretchen, "in coming here to make a wreath without having things to bind them together. It will be hard if I do not find what I want in this grand chamber. Here, lady, whilst I search for it, I pray you to look at my cross ; it is hollow, and has such a fine relic inside of it. You may examine it, lady, whilst I am seeking something that is still wanting to complete my wreath."

There was a look of intelligence in the large grey eye of Gretchen that startled Beatrice, as she received in her hand the small, plain, black wood cross, which Gretchen had removed from the folds of the coarse gown that covered her bosom. Beatrice opened the cross, and she saw inscribed on a minute piece of parchment, these two words, "*Magnus—Adela!*" They sufficed to prove to her that the seemingly

idiotic maiden was a confidential messenger, from those who had already proved themselves to be her sincere friends.

This assurance, whilst it tended to remove from her mind much of that despair, which hitherto had served to benumb her faculties, made her feel an interest in the proceedings of Gretchen. She saw that the latter, under the pretence of searching for something, was, in fact, examining most minutely every portion of the chamber—turning up all the hangings, feeling all the walls, and finally listening with breathless attention at the door, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any one was on the watch outside.

Nought was to be heard but the regular steps of the sentries who had been placed there on the previous night.

Gretchen's examination seemed to give her satisfaction, for upon its conclusion, she ran over to the window, at which Beatrice still sat, and eagerly asked :

“Have you eaten or drank anything since you came here?”

“I have tasted nothing—not even water,” Beatrice.

“Thank God! thank God!” said Gretchen, falling on her knees.

“Then here is something for you—it is food such as I take myself; plain, brown, coarse bread, and pure fresh milk. I would have carried with me something more dainty, but that I was fearful my basket might be examined, and suspicion excited if I had with me any thing but what we poor serfs are accustomed to live upon. Here then eat, for you must be exhausted, for want of some refreshment; and whilst you eat, I will tell you whatever you may desire to know. But before you ask me a question, let me assure you, that I am, as the cross will have shewn you, a messenger from the Countess Adela, and Duke Magnus; that they bid me apprize you, that there is not a portion of this fortress on which a Saxon does not watch from the

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outside ; that the white flag which you may see fluttering on yonder church, was raised this morning by the hands of Magnus ; that it is planted there to prove to you, that in that tower there is always an eye fixed upon this chamber, and that if you should at any time find yourself pressed by a great danger, you have but to appear at this window, and raise your right hand high in the air, or, if you can learn that you are about to be removed from this place, that you will rest both your hands on the sill. If you can find the opportunity for doing either of these things, then you may feel secure, whatever be the hazard of the attempt that assistance will be sought to be given to you, or that to whatever place you are conveyed, you will be followed, and there, as here, the attempt made to rescue you."

As Gretchen spoke, her appearance seemed to alter ; the large, dull, grey eye was now flashing with intellect, the gawky figure became graceful in all its movements,

and the simpleton countenance of the seeming girl was changed to that of a grave, earnest, though very young woman.

“But eat and drink, now, I pray you,” continued Gretchen, “and whilst you do so, I shall weave a garland for you. We must, if possible, not provoke the watchful suspicion of those by whom you are surrounded.”

“I feel grateful to you, Gretchen, for what you say,” replied Beatrice. “But tell me, I pray, why I have been seized upon by armed men, and carried away to this castle, or prison, as if I had been guilty of some crime. Why am I so treated? or, why is my dear mother compelled to suffer on my account such grief? and then my poor father! and good Agatha! Alas! Gretchen, I knew no one else in the world but these and Magnus. How then can I have offended any one, that I should be so misused? Can you explain this to me, Gretchen?”

“I can,” answered Gretchen, her face

flushing with indignation as she spoke. "I can tell you the cause of all this. It is that Germany is now ruled by a miscreant, and not a king. It is because a base villain disgraces the crown, which the second Henry sanctified, and the third Henry glorified by his piety—it is because a wretch who has the power of a sovereign uses that power for the degradation and dishonor of his subjects. I have but to look at you, and I can at once tell for what offences you are confined here. Your crimes consist in your beauty, your youth, and your innocence ; and you are brought here, that you may curse your beauty, that your youth may be deplored with tears, and that your innocence may be forever lost. Had Heaven made you less fair, had age overtaken you, or had it been supposed that sin had found refuge in your heart, then you would be as free to-day, as you were forty-eight hours ago. Henry the Fourth would not have deemed you fitted to be one of his victims."

“Never, lady, did there live so vile a king as ours. No family is safe from his brutal contamination. The daughter of the nobleman, and the wife of the serf are alike perilled, if he but chance to hear, that they are remarkable, in their respective classes of life, for their personal charms, or their great virtues. No tears, no prayers, no resistance can protect them from him ; for he seems to feel, as the devil himself did, when, as we are told, he gained admission, as a serpent, into the garden of Paradise—and never rested until he had covered it with the slime of sin, and made those guilty, who before then had been innocent. He has wiles for the weak, and brute force for the resolute. With you he has employed both. He has torn you from your parents by his vile hirelings, the infidel Patarini of Worms, and he has had you received here by some of the worst of his associates—his female attendants—one of whom you have just seen disguised as a nun ; but who is no more a nun, than

I am a simpleton. He feels no shame in resorting to a worse profanation of holy things ; to effect his purposes, he pretends, sometimes, to marry his victims, and has the ceremony performed by a false priest, or a real priest—in either case, the ceremony being alike invalid—an imposture, if performed by a person who is not a priest—a delusion, if a real priest is cajoled into the administration of such a sacrament, because King Henry is already married. Nay, to such an extent is his profaneness carried, that it is very generally believed he has fitted up in one part of his dominions a gorgeous palace, to which he occasionally resorts with some of his favorites, men as well as women, and that their days are passed in the same frightful debaucheries as were practised by the Roman Emperors, before they became Christians—debaucheries so awful, that it is said, a person could not even know them, or be told of them, without sin.

“Bad and vile, and most wicked as he is, in everything, there is one quality in which he is said to surpass all the worst men that ever lived, and that is in his deceit, his treachery, his hypocrisy, and his perfidiousness, so that, when tasting the food he presses you to eat it may contain poison, which will kill you on the spot, or, what is worse, render you senseless and helpless for many hours. Ready with all sorts of disguises, and artful in tongue, it may happen, that when you fancy you are speaking but to a simple serf, or a plain knight, you may be conversing with King Henry himself.”

“But how am I to know this terrible man if I should ever have the misfortune to see him?” inquired Beatrice.

“It is hard to conjecture whether he will appear before you as the King, or disguised as one of his subjects;” answered Gretchen; “but in any case there are three points about him, which he never can conceal—his great height, his violet blue

eyes, and his mouth, which is generally smiling, and the smile always distorting itself into a sneer. Watch Henry as he speaks, and you must, thus be able to recognize him. Remember, lady, that here—in this den of vice and of sin Henry is omnipotent, and that compared with him both Magnus and Adela are almost as powerless as if they were serfs. In truth, they have not in Frankfort any friends but the Saxon serfs, who are ready to die for them if so commanded. Both will do their best to serve you ; but God alone can save you. I know that when I left them they were resolved upon seeking out the Queen, and the Empress, and apprising them of the outrage of which Henry had been guilty towards you. And now, lady, permit me to array you in the garb of a novice, and to place upon your fair brow this wreath of wild flowers. May each of them rest as a blessing from heaven on your head, and be as a safeguard to your innocence !”

Beatrice, dismayed with the intelligence

she had received, and, learning, it might be said, for the first time what wickedness there is in this world—how powerful is sin, and how weak is virtue, sat confounded with horror, as Gretchen decorated her person, and removed, as well as she could, the outward traces of that grief, which had for so many hours oppressed her heart, and that still festered there.

“And now, lady,” said Gretchen, when she had completed her task, “whenever the false sister Adelaide returns, she will suppose that I have employed all my time in attending upon you. I know not how soon I may be required to depart. Is there any message that you would desire to send to the Countess and Magnus?”

“Yes—my thanks—my tearful, grateful thanks to both—and the request, that, if it be possible, information may be sent to my mother, as to all that has befallen me. Perchance, my father may be able to induce King Henry to set me free. If wealth can buy my liberty, I know my father super-

abounds in it, and will not grudge to give whatever may be demanded."

"Wealth can do much with King Henry," said Gretchen, "for he is as sordid as he is vile. If you do not provoke his hatred—if you do not excite his enmity against you, then there is a chance, that he will sacrifice a caprice to obtain gold. But if he loves you, or dislikes you, then those stronger passions in his heart will overmaster that strong passion—avarice. Be cautious with Henry, and place your confidence in God. But—lo! I hear the door opened gently—and now to deceive the deceivers."

As Gretchen said this, her manner but not her voice changed, as she spoke:

"And now, lady, I pray you cry no more—weeping makes the eyes look so red and so nasty, just like a naughty red flowering weed popping up its ugly face in a bed of white roses."

"I thank you, Gretchen," said the Sister

Adelaide, here advancing into the apartment. "You have done much for the lady during my absence. I pray you now to leave the room, as there is one who wishes to speak with the Lady Beatrice.

"And, good Sister Adelaide, may I not bring more flowers to this nice little girl. No one cries long with the fresh scents of the forest about them," said Gretchen.

"Yes, Gretchen. This evening, or tomorrow you can return. All I now ask of you is to leave us for the present," replied Adelaide.

Gretchen carefully picked up all the flowers that she had strewn about the room, arranged them in her basket, and without once looking either at Adelaide or Beatrice left the room, seemingly deeply engaged in humming to herself the words of a nursery song.

The Sister Adelaide watched with great interest all the proceedings of Gretchen, and perceiving that she had departed, apparently absorbed in the collection of her

flowers, and the words of her ballad, all suspicion, if any had for a moment found a resting-place in her mind, vanished utterly and completely. No sooner were the sounds of Gretchen's voice lost in the distant passages, than Adelaide turned with a smile upon her face, and said to Beatrice—

“This, child, has been a strange hand-maiden for you ; and yet she has done her work neatly ; for never did I, in my life, behold a novice so beautiful as yourself. You are, in sooth, now fitted to appear before the great man who craves permission to see you.”

“A captive,” replied Beatrice, “cannot refuse permission to the jailer to enter his own cell. I permit nothing, I refuse nothing, I am compelled to submit to everything. Such is the will of God, and I accept that which he ordains.”

“Wherefore, child, thus repine, when you know not whether you have cause for joy or sorrow ?” enquired Adelaide.

“Wherefore!” said Beatrice, starting up, and standing erect, as she faced the questioner. “Wherefore repine? *you* ask me? Wherefore does the lamb bleat mournfully when the butcher’s hand has torn it from the fold, in which its mother still remains—even though it knows not that the knife is already sharpened for its throat. Wherefore does the young lark die with grief in the gilded cage of the captor, but because it has been removed from beneath its mother’s fostering wing? Wherefore does a daughter repine when bands of ruffians drag her from her mother’s home, and place her in a sumptuous prison? yet such is the question asked me by one who wears the garb of religion. Oh, God! my God! have mercy on this world, if such a question can be really asked me by one who has made her vows at thy altar.”

The handsome features of Adelaide were wrinkled with a frown, and her face became ghastly pale, as she said :

“I have observed, lady, that you do not

any longer address me as sister. Why do you suppose that I am aught otherwise than what I seem ?”

“God alone knows the heart, man judges by appearances,” answered Beatrice. “I replied, as a Christian maiden to a question that I could not think would, under such circumstances, be asked me by one, who had renounced sin and all its pomps. If I have offended you, I pray you to pardon me. This is to me a strange world ; and as yet I can only judge of it, by what I have been taught, and not, by what I have known.”

“I forgive you, child,” said Adelaide, in accents that trembled with emotion ; “but he who seeks admission will brook no longer delay. Shall I present him to you ?”

“Do as you will,” replied Beatrice. “It is a mockery to ask my assent to that which I have not the power to refuse. I only venture to ask how he is named, who thus insists upon seeing me.”

“Of that I shall inform you, when he

stands before you," replied Adelaide, as she quitted the room.

In a few minutes afterwards, Adelaide returned to the room, leading by the hand one, that Beatrice recognised from Gretchen's description of him, to be King Henry.

"This," said Adelaide, "is his Majesty's prime favourite and minister, *the Count Werenher*. He prays a few moments' audience with you, and alone."

Beatrice looked Adelaide full in the face, when she heard the false name pronounced; but the latter glanced scornfully upon her, as if she deemed the assumption of her now pretended character necessary no longer. Adelaide did not deign to give her an explanation; but whispered a single word in the ear of the King, and then passed hastily from the chamber, closing fast the door as she passed outside.

The moment that Beatrice heard the door close, she knelt down, and before

Henry could utter a word, she thus addressed him :

“ My Lord—my King, one of the poorest, weakest, and most helpless of your thousands upon thousands of subjects, now kneels before you, and implores your pity, if you have compassion—your pardon, if you have mercy—your protection, if you have generosity in your heart.

“ I am my Lord and my King, unpractised in the manners of Courts ; and in my ignorance, I may, unintentionally, offend you. Oh ! if I should do so, forgive me for the sake of my youth, my inexperience, and my sex.

“ I am alone in the midst of strangers—I have none to help me, none to pity me, none to console me. I appeal then to you—to you, as to my sovereign lord—to you, who have the sword of justice to punish the wicked, and the sceptre of power to protect the weak. I appeal to you, whose crown is radiant with jewels, because those

costly jewels are intended to represent the heavenly gifts of courage, chastity, beneficence, magnanimity, and charity : gifts that render the heart of a good king, a temple in which the virtues most willingly take up their abode."

"Maiden, pardon me," said Henry, with one of his sweetest, and most affectionate smiles. " You were told that *I* was Count Werenher, how came you to address me as the King ?"

" And what say *you*, is *your* name ?" asked Beatrice, " but ere you answer that question, pause for an instant before you reply. I will not kneel to a Count Werenher, nor to any one who bears that title—but better to die as I kneel here, than learn that the 'king,' the 'sovereign,' whom I have prayed for in my infancy, is a dastard, who contemplating a base deed, skulks beneath the mask of a villain to perpetrate it!"

" You are right, Beatrice," said Henry, somewhat moved by this unexpected ap-

peal. “It is not fitting in a king to conceal his deeds, whatever they may be. He should have the courage to do, and to defend them, in the close chamber, as in the broad field of battle. Rise, Beatrice ; your King prays of you to rise and be seated.”

Beatrice obeyed ; and as she did so, she said—

“I have appealed to your Majesty’s generosity ; for I know that I am in your power—and having done so, I now beseech your Majesty to tell me why and wherefore I have been torn from my home, and conveyed here as prisoner ?”

“You have recommended your King to be very candid,” said Henry, with a cold, malignant, sneer ; “and you shall soon discover that he can be so. I have sent for you—somewhat rudely, mayhap, considering how tenderly you have been nurtured, for more purposes than one. I now address myself to the first of these. It is a very simple question. I pray of you to

give it a plain and simple answer. It is this : what is the rank, in life, of your father ?”

“I know not,” answered Beatrice.

“What ! you know not ? The daughter of a serf knows that her father cannot move from the land on which she is born, without his lord’s permission ? The daughter of a freeman feels an honest pride in looking upon the sword and shield of her sire ; the daughter of a nobleman boasts of her birth ; and the fair, the accomplished, the lovely, Beatrice—she, who, if she had been born a slave, might, like another Fredegonda, be elevated to the throne of a queen for her beauty, cannot tell to her King, what is the rank in life of her father. This is strange !”

“It may be so, my liege ; but still it is true. To me it never appeared strange ; for my life was always the same, and I never heard any allusion made to my father’s rank,” was the answer given by Beatrice.

“And his name?” inquired the King.

“I never heard him called by any other than that of Ruebert,” said Beatrice, slightly blushing, as her mother’s conversation then, for the first time, flashed across her memory; and, as she pondered upon it, she trembled. It was the first time that she had done so in presence of the King.

Henry knew not the cause of her emotion, or of her fear; but perceiving that these questions gave him an advantage over his destined victim, he determined upon proceeding with them.

“Is your father Ruebert a constant resident at Aschaffenburg?” he asked.

“No, he is not,” replied Beatrice. “His coming and his going are unlike uncertain. Sometimes he remains a day—sometimes a week—sometimes for months together: and his absence is as uncertain—sometimes it is for a brief, sometimes for a long period.”

“And know you how he is employed when he is absent?”

“No, my liege ; and, until you put the question, the idea never occurred to me. All I know is this, that he is very rich—that he entertains a very great respect for your Majesty ; that he told me to pray every night and morning for your Majesty’s health, happiness, and triumph over your enemies ; and I am quite sure, that jewels, and gold would be gladly placed by him in your hands, if I were restored to him safe, and uninjured.”

“This is most strange !” exclaimed Henry, rather speaking to himself, than addressing his observations to Beatrice ; for her answer had completely bewildered him.

“What is most strange, my liege ?” asked Beatrice.

“The account,” replied Henry, “that you give me of your father. Here is a man, possessing unheard-of wealth, engaged in some mysterious occupation, of unknown rank, living as if he were a

Prince of the Empire, and possessing a daughter that seems to be born to a throne, and yet that daughter knows no more of her father, than that she has always heard him called Ruebert ! You have recommended me, Beatrice, to be candid. Have you," said Henry, with his withering, gibing tone, "practised the lesson, maiden, you would yourself so earnestly enforce ?"

"I have, my liege," said Beatrice, looking with her large, dark, truthful eyes up to the admiring countenance of the King. "I have told you the truth—the simple truth—a truth, which every enquiry you may choose to make, will fully confirm."

"It is well," said Henry. "It is more than I expected to hear : it is as much as I desire to know. And now listen to me, Beatrice. I shall be perfectly candid with you. I am, as you are aware, the King of the ancient Empire of Germany. I am responsible to no man for my actions, and yet, so beneficent is my disposition, that I desire to give offence to as few powerful

enemies as possible. I believe, that as King, I have a right to all in my dominions that is most rich, most rare, and most beautiful, whether it be the red gold ; the sparkling and precious diamonds ; or maidens, whose loveliness, and whose virtues render them, in my eyes, more valuable than gold, and more dear to my heart than the most costly ornaments.

“ I believe, I only exercise my right, when I claim any of these for myself. I tell you, Beatrice, there are wise, grave jurists who maintain that these are amongst the rights that may not only be claimed, but exercised by one, who in his person, represents the Roman Emperors.

“ I do not mean to forego any of those rights. It was in the exercise of them, that one of my purveyors, the faithful Egen, saw you in the forest of Aschaffenburg, and brought to me such an account of your marvellous beauty, that I sent him, and with him the Count Werenher, and twenty of my faithful soldiers of Worms,

with command to arrest and bring you here, provided that Werenher deemed you to be as beautiful as Egen had described you. Upon the last day that you sat upon the banks of the Aschaff, Werenher was concealed in the tree beneath which you reposed, and heard your conversation with Agatha, as well as with the boy Magnus. You see, Beatrice, I know more than you, in your candour, have thought it wise or fitting to tell me.

“And now, Beatrice, let me declare to you, that which I do in perfect candour, that you are, in my estimation, the most lovely young maiden I ever looked upon—that I am prepared to admire—nay, to adore you—that I offer you the warm heart, and the ardent affections of a youthful king, if you will but smile upon me. Bid me but hope that I may be loved by you, and I shall be content to wait until your affections for me be awakened by the hourly proofs of my admiration and of my devotion to you.”

“And this is your Majesty’s answer to

the appeal I have made to you," said Beatrice, with a sickening feeling of despair for herself, and of loathing for the king, as she listened to the shameless avowal of his profligacy.

"I cannot look on such transcendent charms, and return any other reply," observed Henry. "It would be my answer to you, if you were the daughter of the Duke of Bavaria; it must be my answer to you, as you are but the child of some obscure man—it would be my answer to him, though he offered, for your release, a mine of rubies. I would not barter one kiss from those maiden lips of yours, for all the treasures that are concealed in the Pope's palace."

"Then God have mercy on me!" said Beatrice, rushing to the window, and raising her right hand as high as she could in the air

"What mean you, Beatrice?" said Henry, mistaking the motive for what she had done. "I have dealt openly—candidly with you—remember that; and also

remember that here I am omnipotent—that here you can find no protector but myself.”

As he spoke these words, he attempted to clasp the hand of Beatrice.

Beatrice shrunk with a shiver of horror from his grasp, and falling upon her knees as he attempted to approach her, she drew forth from the folds of her dress, the little black, rough cross of Gretchen : and held it up before his eyes, saying :

“ Oh, yes! there is here—even in your strong castle, a protector more powerful than you—it is *He* of whose sufferings on this earth, *this* is the emblem.”

As she spoke these words, she turned slowly round on her knees, so as to look with her bright dark eyes up into the cloudless blue sky, and seemingly absorbed in her devotion, she poured forth this prayer in the ears of the profligate king :

“ My God—my God! have compassion on my weakness, and take pity on me in my desolation ; for I am forsaken by man, and am but a frail and helpless woman,

and I have no hope but in Thy strength—the strength of Thy mercy, and the might of Thy charity. And Thou, oh ! Holy Virgin, mother of God, intercede for me. Thou who art most pure, save from contamination, a sinner who invokes thee—a maiden who has ever prayed that thou mightst intercede for her to thy Beloved Son. Oh ! beg that He may now save me in this fearful straight—this impending danger. Oh ! let thy tender arms embrace me, that sin may not approach me, and that impurity may shrink now, as it has ever done, from thy presence. Let thy care, oh ! blessed mother, be bestowed on thy unworthy child—guard me, surround me with thy blessing—the blessing of unstained chastity. Let not this wicked and this great man have power over me—for his power is exercised for the purposes and the works of the devil, and thy power is given to thee for the sanctification and the salvation of mankind. Holy Virgin Mary ! look down with an eye of pity upon me—for,

if thou wilt not take compassion upon me, then I can never again pray to thee, as I do now, with a heart that knows not the worst of sins ; and with lips that are, as yet, not begrimed with the desecrating touch of luxury. Oh ! Mary—mother—Virgin—blessed amongst women—intercede for me with thy Son, or I am now lost, and lost for ever !”

The strength of faith was stronger than the power of the passions ! The prayer of purity found an echo even in the rank heart of the cynical voluptuary ! It did so, and yet no miracle was performed when the selfish and the unrelenting Henry, who never yet had practised a restraint upon his worst desires, shrank back abashed in the presence, and appalled by the accents of that poor, young, helpless, girl, in the lonely chamber of one of the strongest towers in his kingly fortress !

A prayer that, perchance, might now be sneered at, and words that, in these days of indifferentism and infidelity, might be

scoffed, had a *power* at one period in this world's history—and, especially, at the very epoch of which we treat, when men did the work of demons, and yet had the faith of demons : for they practised whatever hell suggested to their hearts ; and, like the imps of hell, they “ trembled ” when That Name was pronounced—in which, as nominal Christians, they placed all their hopes of future salvation.

The great mistake which not merely the men, but the scholars, and above all, the writers of the present generation make, with respect to distant periods in history is, that they judge of the dark ages, as well as of the mediæval times, by two false standards—“ the state of civilization that now exists,” and “ the absence of strong religious faith that now prevails.” There was, in those ancient times, neither of these—the *impulse* then to action was *passion* ; the *controlling power* was alone to be found in *religion* ; and the only

security for men's homes and God's altars was to be found in strong swords, wielded by the hands of brave, good, and pious men. Where such security was lost, then the wicked man was without check or control, unless by some unlooked-for incident he was made to feel that the vengeance of God was impending over him—for there was then no doubt entertained, especially amongst those in an elevated class of life, of God's providence, nor in any other of the truths preached by the Church. And thus it happened, in thousands of instances, that the consciences of sinners became unexpectedly moved, and years of severe penance were devoted to the task of atoning for years of crime and of guilt. Those, then, were the ages of faith—of the most implicit faith, as well as the ages in which the most barbarous deeds were perpetrated. Infidelity was then as little thought of as the invention of gunpowder. All believed, as they professed to believe, in the words of

the baptismal sacrament ; or, if there were to be found unbelievers, they could alone be detected amongst the lowest rabble or the rudest serfs—amongst those who still retained amongst them the superstitions and the idolatry of the Pagan Empire, and who manifested, despite the repeated ordinances of the Church, an attachment to both by the practices of magic. Strange it is that “the philosophers,” “the mesmerists,” and “the infidels” of the nineteenth century can trace out as their predecessors in what is unholy, unlawful, and blasphemous, the opinions and practices to be alone found amongst the brutally ignorant, or the grossly dissolute in the eleventh century—amongst its plebeians, its slaves, and its Paterini.

Henry the Fourth of Germany was not an exception to the princes, or the great men of his time. Although as bad, as vile, and as treacherous a man as ever existed, he was not an unbeliever. He believed in God, although he violated the laws of God—he

believed in all the Church taught, although he trampled upon its commandments, trafficked in its dignities, and would make it the footstool of his selfish, and griping ambition. He was worse than most men of his age ; but was like them in this particular ; he was a great sinner, and yet was not infidel.

It was, then, in the ears of such a man, and at such an epoch, that the prayer of Beatrice was spoken, and that he saw, so ardent was her devotion, and so sincere her confidence in God, and in the the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to whom she appealed, that even his own dreadful presence was for the moment forgotten by her.

Henry's generosity, manliness and honor had been appealed to by Beatrice in vain ; and, now he heard her appealing to Heaven *against him*, and his craven-heart trembled lest one, whom he could not but regard as an angel, should bring down upon him the instant vengeance of an offended God.

He doubted that there was virtue in man ; for, unhappily, he had known many of the Church dignities in Germany to be held by prelates, who were stained with the prevailing sin of simony. That which he fancied he never should behold—unshrinking piety, and unfaltering purity—was there before him, kneeling, and praying to God, to be preserved from *him*, as from a fiend wearing the form of a man !

As this thought crossed his mind, he shuddered—it was a passing, momentary sting of conscience—at the reflection of what he really was : and whilst he was under its influence, he interrupted Beatrice, who was engaged in prayer, by saying to her :

“ Lady Beatrice, your prayer is heard. I will not molest you. I will not harm you. I will not approach you, nearer than I am this moment, until I have first obtained your permission to do so.

“ Your prayer has convinced me that there is no dignity on this earth, that you

could not illustrate by your virtues, and honor by your piety. Beatrice, I care not who may be your father, nor how humble may be his rank in life : for, by yourself, alone, and by these marvellous gifts of soul and body, with which Heaven has endowed you, I deem you, of all women, the only one I ever saw who was worthy to be Queen now, and Empress hereafter, of Germany.

“Nay, start not, Beatrice, as if you thought I was speaking to you but mere words of flattery, or making professions to you, that I did not fully intend to carry into effect. When I say to you, that I think you worthy of wearing a crown in Germany, I mean that you shall do so—as the wife—the Queen of Henry—every knee shall bend before you, and the proudest dames shall feel that they are honored if you address but a single word to them.

“What I now say to you, Beatrice, shall, before a month has passed away, be

fulfilled. Within less than three weeks a synod shall be held in Frankfort, at which the Prelates of Germany will pronounce that my marriage with Bertha has, from the first, been invalid. This divorce I sought for before I saw you, both for the sake of Bertha and myself; and the moment that the Church pronounces me to be free—free as if the hateful bond that now ties me to Bertha had never been contracted; then that moment, Beatrice, your King shall claim you in the face of the world as his bride. Meanwhile, you shall be removed from the palace in which I am, to the strongest fortress I possess in Saxony—to the fortress of —”

“My liege—my liege—your presence is required on the instant in your council chamber,” said Lieman, here rushing pale and almost breathless into the room. “From all parts of the fortress the sentinels send the same reports, that large bodies of the Saxon serfs were approaching the walls, as if an attack upon it were

contemplated, and messengers from the town state, that there is a movement amongst the slaves, as if they were about to commit some outrage."

"I trust that the intelligence may prove true," exclaimed Henry. "I long to exterminate the vile race of Saxons, and care not where I may begin—better here, perhaps, than elsewhere. Come, Lieman, my helmet, shield, and haubergeon instantly. Beatrice, farewell. We meet in Saxony."

Henry hurriedly left the room as he pronounced these words.

Whilst the King had been speaking to her, she could, in her joy and thankfulness for her wonderful escape from him, only comprehend distinctly this--that her prayer had been heard, and that *she had escaped*. It was not, until she had offered up a heartfelt prayer, and the King had for some time left the chamber, that the purport of his words came distinctly to her mind, and that, amongst the other strange things he had told her, was this, that she

was to be removed from Frankfort. Remembering this, she also recollected the conversation of Gretchen, and combining these with the threats of Henry against the Saxons, she grieved to think that she had lost a moment in giving the preconcerted signal as to her contemplated removal. She hurried then to the window—and resting upon both her hands, looked out from it, as far as its narrow space would permit upon the white flag still flaunting on the tower of the Cathedral.

Whilst Beatrice thus gazed, she perceived a light blue flag raised aloft by the side of the white. She rejoiced to see it, for it shewed to her that she had been recognized; and she also rejoiced—it was a maidenly, perhaps a childish, but still a devotional fancy—for in the azure flag she hailed the colour peculiarly assigned to the honor of that Virgin—the maiden mother of maidens, to whom she had so recently addressed her prayer: and as she indulged

this feeling, her whole being became suffused with an ecstatic sensation of bliss, which none but the sincerely pious, and the truly pure of heart are ever destined to feel.

As Beatrice still watched the fluttering flags, both suddenly disappeared ; and as they did so, she turned away from the window, and looked towards the room, which, to her surprise, she saw was now occupied by two females, both most unlike to those she had previously encountered in the palace.

CHAPTER X.

THE EMPRESS AGNES AND QUEEN BERTHA.

THE two females, who had entered the apartment of Beatrice, noiselessly and unperceived by her, were evidently in the very highest rank of life, even though the dark dress of the elder, in its sombre hue, and plainness of texture, resembled the garb of a nun, and the lighter fashioned robes of her youthful companion were not, in any way, adorned by embroidery. Both were, however, it could

be perceived, of exalted station, and possessed, at least, of great wealth ; for, on the breast of the elder, there hung, attached by what was an almost imperceptible thread of gold, a cross, composed of sparkling brilliants, and around the dark tresses of the younger, there ran, in the fashion of an imperial circlet, a band, composed of diamonds.

Beatrice, unpractised as she was in the forms of society, had yet been too well instructed respecting the customs of the age, not to be conscious that she stood in the presence, at least, of one of imperial rank, and she supposed, from their appearance, and the cordial, loving manner in which the elder female leant her arm upon the younger, that both were probably the relatives of the king. This was her first impression upon beholding them ; but a second and a fixed glance confirmed it ; for she could not but recognise in the elder female some of the features of Henry, with the exception of the eyes and

the mouth. There was the same high, commanding brow, the same straight nose, the same rounded chin, and the same awe-inspiring look. These were the resemblances between the two ; but the dissimilarity between the woman and the man were still greater : instead of the flaxen locks of Henry, the hair of the female had become white as the drifted snow ; instead of his laughing, red, rosy lips, the lips of the female were thin ; and care had wrinkled the corners of the mouth, and affliction had set his seal upon it, as if a smile could now find no resting place there ; instead, too, of the peachy cheek of Henry, the cheeks of the female were of a deadly paleness—so ghastly white, that the blood seemed never to have suffused them, and they were like the forehead, crossed and crossed again with deep lines, as if the vigils of the mourner had been broken in upon constantly by new afflictions, and unlooked for griefs. The face was that of a very

old woman, which seemed to have been placed upon a person, that, in its erect position, and its rounded outlines did not seem to have reached, much less to have passed, the middle period of life.

This was the Empress Agnes, the mother of King Henry.

Her companion was young — very young—it would be difficult to decide upon first looking at her whether she was sixteen or twenty years of age ; for her figure was so slight, and at the same time so much beneath the middle-size of women, that one would long hesitate to say that she could by possibility be older than sixteen, if there were not in the chastened eye, the grave look, and the pensive gesture in her movements somewhat to demonstrate that more than the sorrows that vex the heart of a girl of sixteen had found a resting-place in her bosom. She was of Italy, and there was no mistaking the place of her birth in her rich brown skin, her pearly teeth, her pout-

ing mouth, her Roman nose, her jet-black eyes, and her hair, that in the intensity of its blackness, gave forth a blueish hue. This beautiful 'and this delicate young creature, on whose arm the Empress leant, now looked at Beatrice with an interest—an intensity of interest, which none but a wife can feel, when gazing on a female, who has unwillingly, won, or unconsciously attracted the admiration of a husband. It was Queen Bertha, the wife of Henry, who knew that the lovely Beatrice was an unwilling captor in the power of her husband. Her features expressed what was passing in her heart—profound pity, and irrepressible admiration—the first for the situation of Beatrice, the other for her beauty.

Beatrice was conscious that she stood in the presence of one at least her superior in rank, and she suspected of two. She gave way to that conviction, and to the natural sympathy of youth, when she fell upon her knees, and kissing the hand of Bertha, said—

“I know not, lady, who you are, but I am sure I do not err when, in presence of this august female, who seems to be a mother, I beg you to exercise the power you are plainly possessed of here, by commanding that a daughter may be instantly restored to the arms of an anguished parent.”

“Alas, that I could but exercise that power you suppose me to have,” answered Bertha. “But know that by your presence here an outrage is done to you, and an injury inflicted on me ; for I am the unloved wife of King Henry.”

“And I, my dear child—the unhappy mother of the same Henry—bless thee, the last of his victims—and pray that thou mayest long live to offer thy prayers to Heaven to pardon him for this and his other manifold sins.” And as the Empress spoke these words, she laid her hand upon the head of Beatrice, as if pronouncing a benediction over her. She then stretched forth her hand to Beatrice, and said—“Rise

up, my child. Whatever be thy condition in life, an injury to both, perpetrated by the same hand, has placed us on an equality with each other."

Beatrice kissed the hand of the Empress, and then said—

"By what fortunate chance is it that one, so humble as myself, should be honoured by a visit from Your Majesties, who now appear before me, as my guardian-angels.

"If our presence here can confer upon thee aught of good, thou art indebted for it to the information conveyed to us by the Countess Dedi, who has also apprised us that thou art the betrothed of Duke Magnus, and that thou hast been conveyed hither in thine own despite. Poor girl! from my soul I pity thee; and rest assured that Bertha and I will aid thee, if it be possible for us to do so."

So spoke the Empress to Beatrice.

"But mother, you have not asked her if

she has seen the King," said Bertha, with deep emotion.

"I have," answered Beatrice, "and it much interests Your Majesty to know what he said to me. I will not offend your ears by some words he said ; but this you should know, that he spoke to me of being speedily divorced from Your Majesty."

"Divorced!" exclaimed Bertha, "divorced! are you sure he said divorced?"

"Most certain, madam, and even by the words he used he led me to suppose, that a divorce was as necessary for your happiness, as his own," answered Beatrice.

Bertha stood motionless as these words reached her ear. They seemed to penetrate to her brain, and to have transfixed her for some minutes to the spot. She could not speak—she looked at Beatrice, as the dying and despairing sinner looks upon the physician who tells him that his moments in this world are few in number. Then turn-

ing to her companions she flung her arms wildly around the neck of the Empress, and clasping her convulsively to her bosom, she sobbed out as if each word would burst her heart :

“ *Divorced !* Oh ! mother ! mother ! do you not pity me ? ”

The Empress had been for years accustomed to grief. It had not hardened her heart, nor rendered, in the slightest degree, her feelings callous ; but it had so strengthened her will, that she could command her emotions. She was in sorrow, what the veteran is in the field of battle, and the wound, that might be mortal, was, when inflicted, received and regarded as of no more consequence than one that could impose but a passing pain, or bring with it no more than a temporary inconvenience.

“ Bertha, my child, God was pleased to place a heavy burden upon you, when *He* permitted your marriage with my son,” was the observation of Agnes.

“ But then, mother, to be divorced ! —

divorced from *him*!—divorced from Henry!—who, before now ever heard of two young persons who loved each other once so truly—for I am sure, mother, he did love me once—who, I ask, ever heard of a Christian wife and husband being divorced from each other?” asked Bertha, in her distraction and despair.

“ True—true, my child,” replied Agnes, “ it is monstrous, and would be incredible, but that I may also ask another question—who before now ever heard of so reckless a man, as Henry ?”

“ Mother—mother—spare the faults of a son in compassion towards the feelings of a wife!” said the gentle, generous Bertha. “ Divorced ! it is the thought of a Pagan, and not of a Christian. I cannot believe it, or—Oh ! now I understand it—he but made use of such a device, for the purpose of deluding and deceiving this good, and innocent maiden. Oh ! no, mother, I must admit he is a bad man—a very great sinner—but he never could have become so

lost to the faith of a Christian, as to trample on one of the holy sacraments of the Church. To talk of a divorce must be with him a device, and not a serious thought."

"I have never seen nor spoken with His Majesty until this day," observed Beatrice, "and therefore cannot tell when he speaks in seriousness or in jest, or whether it was his real intention to wrong one of your Majesty's exalted rank, or to degrade a helpless maiden like myself; but this I may add, as proving his fixed resolution to do the one and the other, that he voluntarily declared that he would never again appear before me, until he had been divorced from you—a divorce, which, he said, would be pronounced within the course of a few weeks; and, pending the time for its being pronounced, he said that he would have me removed to a fortress in Saxony."

Whilst Beatrice spoke, there was such truth, such sincerity in her words, and such conviction brought home to the heart

by the earnestness and solemnity of her manner, that Bertha clung closer to Agnes, and seemed to feel, whilst she clasped the Empress within her arms, as if the voice of Henry was thundering in her ear, announcing his approaching separation from her. Her attitude portrayed the fear and dismay that shook her whole being.

“Bertha, my beloved,” said the Empress Agnes, “I say to you, now—and alas! not for the first time, that he who has been a bad son can never be a good husband. Of any other man but Henry, what this maiden says would be incredible; but when told of him, because it is an enormous iniquity, we must believe it to be true. If the tears of an angel could have softened a hardened heart, then yours must have long since turned Henry from the evil of his ways: if the prayers of saints could have converted him, then he must long ere this have ceased to be a sinner; for there is scarcely a church, either near or far, on which I have not had the holy sacrifice offered up in

his behalf, and Heaven itself has been beset with prayers for his salvation. All has been in vain ; for in his headlong career of vice he has hitherto experienced no difficulty, and encountered no obstacle. He is the spoiled child of an unchanging prosperity—a King, in the fifth year of his age, he has become a man, but to indulge his passions, and give an unbridled way to his caprices. He has despised me, and rejected you, and now seems determined, if he be not opposed, to add to all his other crimes, blasphemy and sacrilege. *He shall be opposed.* As his mother, as his wife, as Christians, we are compelled now, by his own acts, to place ourselves in opposition to him. Listen to me, Bertha, I am sure that he has determined upon being divorced from you, as this maiden informs us.

“ But how, you may ask, is it possible for Henry to seek for his divorce from one that he has accepted as his wife in the face of day—that for some time he treated and loved as his wife ? He can only seek to

attain his ends by foul perjury—perchance, amongst his other projects he contemplates resorting to some base deed of cruelty, to force you to an act of perjury—compelling you, for instance, to say, that you were never received by him, nor treated by him as if you were his wife. It is the only ground on which the Church could grant him a divorce.

“Ah me! Bertha, I shudder, when I think how this Henry has degraded the Church in Germany; how he has sold so many of its mitres for money, and thus contrived to crowd the sanctuary with his own corrupt creatures—with sordid men, who seek promotion at his hands, or, with cravens who fear to provoke his enmity. I do believe, my poor child, that if Henry appeals to such a tribunal for a divorce, that his proofs will not be very closely sifted; for I do not believe that there are at this moment more than five German Bishops ready to lay down their lives in defence of the faith. And what are they amongst so

many ? Before a tribunal so corrupt and so weak what chance have innocence, weakness and virtue, when assailed by power united to perjury ? Alas ! none.

“ We have no hope in Germany. It is bound down with the strong fetters of a remorseless, pitiless, conscienceless tyrant. Our only hope is in Rome—our only chance of finding a protector in the Supreme Pontiff. To him we must appeal without a moment’s delay ; for he alone is strong enough to resist Henry—and here it becomes the duty of the Holy Father to resist him ; for Henry in seeking to repudiate you, seeks by perjury to violate the marriage vow he gave to you, and to force another—even the poor trembling girl before us—into a sacrilegious marriage. What say you, Bertha ? Am I not right in declaring we should not lose a single moment in appealing to the Pope ? ”

“ Oh ! ” cried Bertha, “ that the Holy Father did but know all.”

“ Bertha—my child—he shall know all.

Fortunately the Pope is much nearer to the borders of the German dominions than Henry wots of. This very night a trusty messenger bearing my declarations and yours, and shewing that you are, whatever may be the affirmations to the contrary, the true and lawful wife of Henry shall be forwarded to his Holiness, and thus your husband be saved from a worse crime, if that be possible, than any of which he has yet been guilty."

Bertha listened with the patient docility of a loving and a grateful daughter to the words of the Empress Agnes. She first kissed her hand and then both her cheeks : and then turning to Beatrice, and gazing long and steadfastly in her tear-bedewed, loving eyes, she herself burst into tears, and throwing her arms around the maiden's neck, she kissed her again, and again ; and as soon as she could suppress the emotions that made her tremble in every limb, she thus spoke to her :

“ My innocent, my lovely, and my unwilling rival, I cannot look upon you, without feeling that you are my superior in all those attractions likely to win the admiration, and to secure the affections of a man, who has, from boyhood, rendered himself the slave of female beauty. If I were not married to Henry—if I were like you a maiden, and he stood this moment before us, bound by no vow, pronounced in presence of God’s holy altar, I could not blame—nay, I must approve his judgment, if looking upon us both, he preferred you, and rejected me. It is not so. God has ordained it otherwise. He is my husband: I am his wife, until death parts us. He unfortunately has, in abandoning me, violated the laws of God; and your innocence, your beauty, and your virtues, have been as sins in his path, and urged him onward to be guilty of a greater crime against me, against you, and against Heaven. In all this you are, like myself,

an unoffending and a helpless victim. He would unrighteously take from me this royal circlet, the emblem of my dignity, and bestow it upon you. If you accepted it from his hands, you would participate in his sin ; but receiving it from mine, it shall ever remain a testimony of the love, and a proof of the affection entertained for you by Bertha—your queen and your friend.”

As Bertha spoke, she unloosed the sparkling diadem from her dark hair, and tendered it to Beatrice.

Beatrice, instead of stretching forth her hand to receive the costly gift—precious as the ransom of a duke, bent her knee to Bertha, as a subject to a sovereign, and said, in words that were as sweet as music to the ear of the desolate wife :

“ I pray your Majesty to pardon a poor ignorant girl, who knows not the manners of the great ones of this earth, if I presume to decline receiving that gorgeous

ornament. If I were to accept it, I would seem to you—at least I think so—as if I felt that I had done that which was worthy of commendation because I had preferred death to dishonor. Alas! Lady—my generous sovereign—I cannot look upon you—your sweetness, your grace, your gentleness, and your beauty without marvelling how any one could estrange himself for a moment from your society—and I cannot but marvel at it the more, when I think that he who does this is a king, and that having you to love, he should look upon any other of your sex; for all are unworthy to be compared to you.

“ I know not how to flatter, sovereign lady, unless truth be flattery; and now having defied my king, scorned his proposals, provoked his wrath, and exposed myself to his vengeance, because I preferred truth, honour, and virtue, to the smiles and favour of the greatest monarch upon this earth, I may be well believed by his

wife, my queen and my sovereign, when I thus kneel before her, and declare myself in every way unworthy to be compared to her—unworthy to touch her hand—and how much the more unworthy to receive so costly a gift from her.

“ Pardon me then, Lady, when I say I cannot, must not, will not accept the diadem that you tender to me.”

The Empress stooped down to Beatrice as she knelt, and kissing her on the forehead, exclaimed :

“ God bless thee maiden ! for amongst thy other graces, thou art, I perceive, richly endowed with that most precious of virtues—a perfect humility. I cannot but perceive in thy attitude, as in thy garb as a novice, and in the virginal garland that decorates thy innocent head, that thou seemest to be one, that God has chosen for *Himself*—too good to be associated with mankind : too pure for this world and its vanities to be allowed to approach thee.

It seems to me that God will, in His mercy, spare thee from the many sorrows of marriage, and preserve thee from a still greater misery—my misery—that of being the mother of a wilful, a wicked, and a disobedient child. Perchance, I may err in this supposition ; but in either case, accept this cross of brilliants—it is the gift of an Empress, and cannot be refused by a subject. If thou shouldst be an earthly bride, it will be to thee precious, because of the holy thoughts it will awaken ; and to thy husband, if he should be sordid, it will be useful, because of its intrinsic value : but if, as I believe, thy bridegroom shall be One Whose love is unchanging in this world, and in the next, then this cross will be a fitting offering for thee to lay upon the altar of His Blessed mother.”

“And now, my dearest children,” continued the Empress, clasping, at the same time, a hand of Bertha and of Beatrice, “let us part, I trust to meet again in this

world. As to Beatrice—although this palace is a den of iniquity—and not only men, but even women are to be found in it ready to do the work of demons, still there are even here, a few, honest, good, faithful and pious persons. These shall have strict order to watch over thee whilst thou remain, and to follow thy footsteps wheresoever thou mayest be conveyed. Conceal this cross of brilliants, and whenever thy hand touches it think of me—of the Empress, as a friend ; and pray for her—as a sinner !

“ Come, Bertha, I shall tell you how I mean to send my communication to the Pope, so as to save you from shame, and this poor girl from dishonour. God bless thee, Beatrice ! Come Bertha.”

Bertha spoke not a word ; but hastily quitting the side of the Empress, as both were on the point of retiring from the apartment. she hurried back to Beatrice, and kissing her long and ardently, she merely

murmured, or rather whispered, as if it were an ejaculation into her ear :

“ Pray for me also, dearest Beatrice, and
—*for yourself.*”

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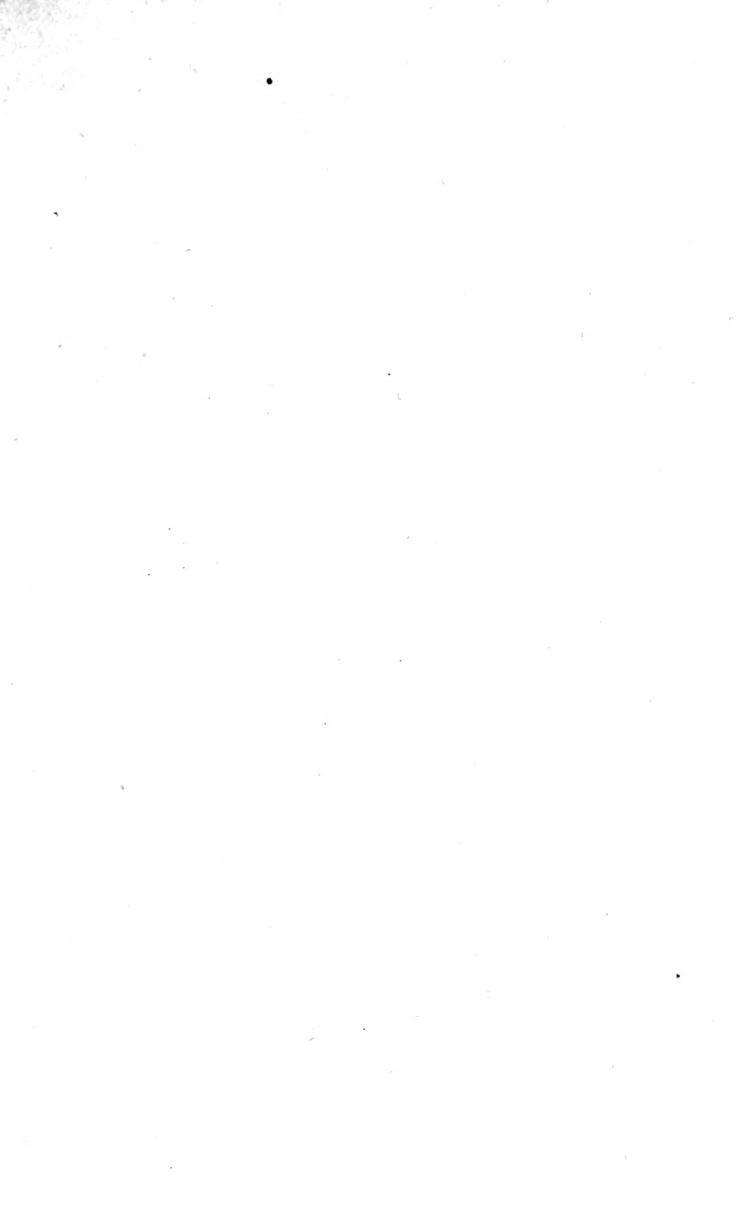
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